









WESSEX POEMS AND OTHER VERSES  
POEMS OF THE PAST AND THE  
PRESENT

## BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

*UNIFORM WITH THIS EDITION.*

TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES.  
FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD.  
THE MAYOR OF CASTERBRIDGE.  
A PAIR OF BLUE EYES.  
TWO ON A TOWER.  
THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE.  
THE WOODLANDERS.  
JUDE THE OBSCURE.  
THE TRUMPET-MAJOR.  
THE HAND OF ETHELBERTA.  
A LAODICEAN.  
DESPERATE REMEDIES.  
WESSEX TALES.  
LIFE'S LITTLE IRONIES.  
A GROUP OF NOBLE DAMES.  
UNDER THE GREENWOOD TREE.  
THE WELL-BELOVED.  
A CHANGED MAN, THE WAITING SUPPER,  
and other Tales.  
WESSEX POEMS: POEMS OF THE PAST  
AND THE PRESENT.  
TIME'S LAUGHINGSTOCKS, and other Verses.  
SATIRES OF CIRCUMSTANCE: Lyrics and  
Reveries.  
MOMENTS OF VISION, and Miscellaneous Verses.  
LATE LYRICS AND EARLIER, with many  
other Verses.  
THE DYNASTS, Parts I. and II.  
THE DYNASTS, Part III., and THE QUEEN  
OF CORNWALL.  
HUMAN SHOWS: FAR PHANTASIES: SONGS  
AND TRIFLES.

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THOMAS HARDY'S WESSEX. By HERMANN  
LEA. Illustrated.

WESSEX POEMS AND  
OTHER VERSES  
POEMS OF THE PAST  
AND THE PRESENT

BY

THOMAS HARDY

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## PREFACE TO WESSEX POEMS

**O**F the miscellaneous collection of verse that follows, only four pieces have been published, though many were written long ago, and others partly written. In some few cases the verses were turned into prose and printed as such, it having been unanticipated at that time that they might see the light.

Whenever an ancient and legitimate word of the district, for which there was no equivalent in received English, suggested itself as the most natural, nearest, and often only expression of a thought, it has been made use of, on what seemed good grounds.

The pieces are in a large degree dramatic or personative in conception; and this even where they are not obviously so.

The dates attached to some of the poems do not apply to the rough sketches given in illustration, which have been recently made, and, as may be surmised, are inserted for personal and local reasons rather than for their intrinsic qualities.

T. H.

*September 1898.*

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## PREFACE TO POEMS OF THE PAST AND THE PRESENT

HEREWITH I tender my thanks to the editors and proprietors of the *Times*, the *Morning Post*, the *Daily Chronicle*, the *Westminster Gazette*, *Literature*, the *Graphic*, *Cornhill*, *Sphere*, and other papers, for permission to reprint from their pages such of the following pieces of verse as have already been published.

Of the subject-matter of this volume—even that which is in other than narrative form—much is dramatic or impersonative even where not explicitly so. Moreover, that portion which

may be regarded as individual comprises a series of feelings and fancies written down in widely differing moods and circumstances, and at various dates. It will probably be found, therefore, to possess little cohesion of thought or harmony of colouring. I do not greatly regret this. Unadjusted impressions have their value, and the road to a true philosophy of life seems to lie in humbly recording diverse readings of its phenomena as they are forced upon us by chance and change.

T. H.

*August 1901.*



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WESSEX POEMS

“Cherish him can I while the true one forth-  
come—

Come the rich fulfiller of my prevision ;  
Life is roomy yet, and the odds unbounded.”  
So self-communed I.

’Thwart my wistful way did a damsel saunter,  
Fair, albeit unformed to be all-eclipsing ;  
“Maiden meet,” held I, “till arise my forefelt  
Wonder of women.”

Long a visioned hermitage deep desiring,  
Tenements uncouth I was fain to house in ;  
“Let such lodging be for a breath-while,”  
thought I,  
“Soon a more seemly.

“Then, high handiwork will I make my life-  
deed,  
Truth and Light outshow ; but the ripe time  
pending,  
Intermissive aim at the thing sufficeth.”  
Thus I . . . But lo, me !

Mistress, friend, place, aims to be bettered  
straightway,

Bettered not has Fate or my hand's achievement ;  
Sole the showance those of my onward earth-  
track—

Never transcended !

## AMABEL

I MARKED her ruined hues,  
Her custom-straitened views,  
And asked, "Can there indwell  
My Amabel?"

I looked upon her gown,  
Once rose, now earthen brown ;  
The change was like the knell  
Of Amabel.



Her step's mechanic ways  
Had lost the life of May's ;  
Her laugh, once sweet in swell,  
    Spoilt Amabel.

I mused : " Who sings the strain  
I sang ere warmth did wane ?  
Who thinks its numbers spell  
    His Amabel ?"—

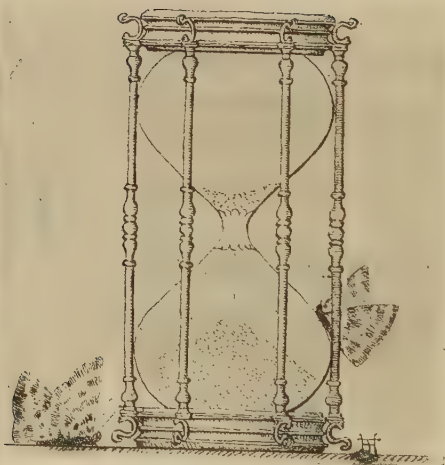
Knowing that, though Love cease,  
Love's race shows no decrease ;  
All find in dorp or dell  
    An Amabel.

—I felt that I could creep  
To some housetop, and weep  
That Time the tyrant fell  
    Ruled Amabel !

I said (the while I sighed  
That love like ours had died),  
" Fond things I'll no more tell  
    To Amabel,

“But leave her to her fate,  
And fling across the gate,  
‘Till the Last Trump, farewell,  
O Amabel !’ ”

1865.



## H A P

**I**F but some vengeful god would call to me  
From up the sky, and laugh : "Thou suffering thing,  
Know that thy sorrow is my ecstasy,  
That thy love's loss is my hate's profiting !"

Then would I bear it, clench myself, and  
die,  
Steeled by the sense of ire unmerited ;  
Half-eased in that a Powerfuller than I  
Had willed and meted me the tears I shed.

But not so. How arrives it joy lies slain,  
And why unblooms the best hope ever sown ?  
—Crass Casualty obstructs the sun and rain,  
And dicing Time for gladness casts a moan. . . .  
These purblind Doomsters had as readily  
    strown  
Blisses about my pilgrimage as pain.

1866.

“IN VISION I ROAMED”

TO ———

**I**N vision I roamed the flashing Firmament,  
So fierce in blazon that the Night waxed wan,  
As though with awe at orbs of such ostént;  
And as I thought my spirit ranged on and on

In footless traverse through ghaſt heights of ſky,  
To the laſt chambers of the monſtrous Dome,  
Where ſtars the brighteſt here are loſt to the eye:  
Then, any ſpot on our own Earth ſeemed  
Home!

And the sick grief that you were far away  
Grew pleasant thankfulness that you were near,  
Who might have been, set on some foreign  
Sphere,  
Less than a Want to me, as day by day  
I lived unaware, uncaring all that lay  
Locked in that Universe taciturn and drear.

1866.

AT A BRIDAL  
NATURE'S INDIFFERENCE

WHEN you paced forth, to await maternity,

A dream of other offspring held my mind,  
Compounded of us twain as Love designed ;  
Rare forms, that corporate now will never be !

Should I, too, wed as slave to Mode's decree,  
And each thus found apart, of false desire,  
A stolid line, whom no high aims will fire  
As had fired ours could ever have mingled we ;



And, grieved that lives so matched should mis-  
compose,

Each mourn the double waste ; and question  
dare

To the Great Dame whence incarnation flows,  
Why those high-purposed children never were :  
What will she answer ? That she does not  
care

If the race all such sovereign types unknowns.

1866.

## POSTPONEMENT

S NOW-BOUND in woodland, a mournful  
word,  
Dropt now and then from the bill of a  
bird,  
Reached me on wind-wafts ; and thus I heard,  
Wearily waiting :—

“I planned her a nest in a leafless tree,  
But the passers eyed and twitted me,  
And said : ‘How reckless a bird is he,  
Cheerily mating!’

“ Fear-filled, I stayed me till summer-tide,  
In lewth of leaves to throne her bride ;  
But alas ! her love for me waned and died,  
Wearily waiting.

“ Ah, had I been like some I see,  
Born to an evergreen nesting-tree,  
None had eyed and twitted me,  
Cheerily mating !”

1866.

A CONFESSION TO A FRIEND  
IN TROUBLE

YOUR troubles shrink not, though I feel  
them less

Here, far away, than when I tarried near ;  
I even smile old smiles—with listlessness—  
Yet smiles they are, not ghastly mockeries mere.

A thought too strange to house within my brain  
Haunting its outer precincts I discern :

—*That I will not show zeal again to learn*

*Your griefs, and, sharing them, renew my pain. . . .*

It goes, like murky bird or buccaneer  
That shapes its lawless figure on the main,  
And staunchness tends to banish utterly  
The unseemly instinct that had lodgment here;  
Yet, comrade old, can bitterer knowledge be  
Than that, though banned, such instinct was  
          in me !

1866.

## NEUTRAL TONES

WE stood by a pond that winter day,  
And the sun was white, as though  
chidden of God,  
And a few leaves lay on the starving sod,  
—They had fallen from an ash, and  
were gray.

Your eyes on me were as eyes that rove  
Over tedious riddles of years ago ;  
And some words played between us to and  
fro—  
On which lost the more by our love.

The smile on your mouth was the dearest  
thing

Alive enough to have strength to die ;

And a grin of bitterness swept thereby

Like an ominous bird a-wing. . . .

Since then, keen lessons that love deceives,

And wrings with wrong, have shaped to me

Your face, and the God-curst sun, and a tree,

And a pond edged with grayish leaves.

1867.



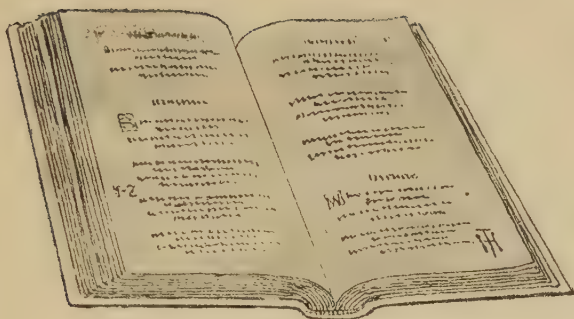


## SHE

### AT HIS FUNERAL

THEY bear him to his resting-place—  
In slow procession sweeping by ;  
I follow at a stranger's space ;  
His kindred they, his sweetheart I.  
Unchanged my gown of garish dye,  
Though sable-sad is their attire ;  
But they stand round with griefless eye,  
Whilst my regret consumes like fire !





## HER INITIALS

UPON a poet's page I wrote  
 Of old two letters of her name ;  
 Part seemed she of the effulgent thought  
 Whence that high singer's rapture came.  
 —When now I turn the leaf the same  
 Immortal light illumes the lay,  
 But from the letters of her name  
 The radiance has waned away !

1869.



## HER DILEMMA

(IN — CHURCH)

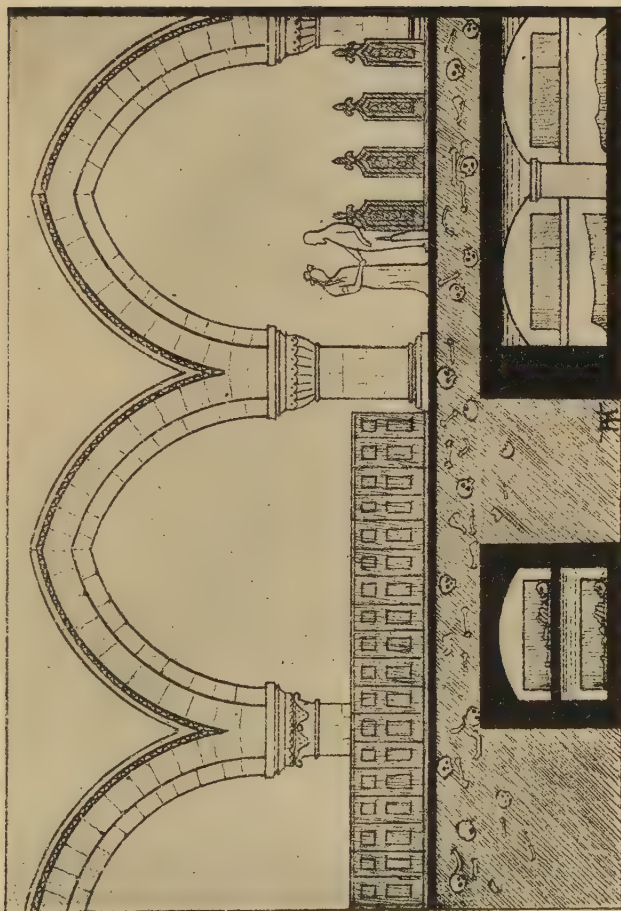
THE two were silent in a sunless church,  
Whose mildewed walls, uneven paving-  
stones,  
And wasted carvings passed antique research;  
And nothing broke the clock's dull mono-  
tones.

Leaning against a wormy poppy-head,  
So wan and worn that he could scarcely  
stand,

—For he was soon to die,—he softly said,  
“Tell me you love me!”—holding long her  
hand.

She would have given a world to breathe  
“yes” truly,  
So much his life seemed hanging on her  
mind,  
And hence she lied, her heart persuaded  
thoroughly  
’Twas worth her soul to be a moment kind.

But the sad need thereof, his nearing death,  
So mocked humanity that she shamed to prize  
A world conditioned thus, or care for breath  
Where Nature such dilemmas could devise.







## REVULSION

THOUGH I waste watches framing words  
to fetter

Some unknown spirit to mine in clasp and kiss,  
Out of the night there looms a sense 'twere  
better

To fail obtaining whom one fails to miss.

For winning love we win the risk of losing,  
And losing love is as one's life were riven;  
It cuts like contumely and keen ill-using  
To cede what was superfluously given.

Let me then never feel the fateful thrilling  
That devastates the love-worn wooer's frame,  
The hot ado of fevered hopes, the chilling  
That agonizes disappointed aim !  
So may I live no junctive law fulfilling,  
And my heart's table bear no woman's name.

1866.





## SHE, TO HIM

### I

WHEN you shall see me in the toils of  
Time,

My lauded beauties carried off from me,  
My eyes no longer stars as in their prime,  
My name forgot of Maiden Fair and Free ;

When, in your being, heart concedes to mind,  
And judgment, though you scarce its process  
know,

Recalls the excellencies I once enshrined,  
And you are irked that they have withered so :

Remembering mine the loss is, not the blame,  
That Sportsman Time but rears his brood to  
kill,  
Knowing me in my soul the very same—  
One who would die to spare you touch of ill !—  
Will you not grant to old affection's claim  
The hand of friendship down Life's sunless  
hill ?

1866.

## SHE, TO HIM

### II

PERHAPS, long hence, when I have  
passed away,  
Some other's feature, accent, thought like mine,  
Will carry you back to what I used to say,  
And bring some memory of your love's decline.

Then you may pause awhile and think, "Poor  
jade!"

And yield a sigh to me—as ample due,  
Not as the tittle of a debt unpaid  
To one who could resign her all to you—

And thus reflecting, you will never see  
That your thin thought, in two small words  
conveyed,

Was no such fleeting phantom-thought to me,  
But the Whole Life wherein my part was  
played ;

And you amid its fitful masquerade

A Thought—as I in your life seem to be !

1866.



## SHE, TO HIM

### III

**I** WILL be faithful to thee ; aye, I will !  
And Death shall choose me with a wondering eye

That he did not discern and domicile  
One his by right ever since that last Good-bye !

I have no care for friends, or kin, or prime  
Of manhood who deal gently with me here ;  
Amid the happy people of my time  
Who work their love's fulfilment, I appear

Numb as a vane that cankers on its point,  
True to the wind that kissed ere canker came;  
Despised by souls of Now, who would dis-  
joint

The mind from memory, making Life all aim,

My old dexterities in witchery gone,  
And nothing left for Love to look upon.

1866.

## SHE, TO HIM

### IV

**T**HIS love puts all humanity from me ;  
I can but maledict her, pray her dead,  
For giving love and getting love of thee—  
Feeding a heart that else mine own had fed !

How much I love I know not, life not known,  
Save as one unit I would add love by ;  
But this I know, my being is but thine  
own—

Fused from its separateness by ecstasy.

And thus I grasp thy amplitudes, of her  
Ungrasped, though helped by nigh-regarding  
eyes ;

Canst thou then hate me as an envier  
Who see unrecked what I so dearly prize ?  
Believe me, Lost One, Love is lovelier  
The more it shapes its moan in selfish-wise.

1866.

## DITTY

(E. L. G.)

BENEATH a knap where flown  
Nestlings play,  
Within walls of weathered stone,  
Far away  
From the files of formal houses,  
By the bough the firstling browses,  
Lives a Sweet : no merchants meet,  
No man barter, no man sells  
Where she dwells.

Upon that fabric fair

“Here is she!”

Seems written everywhere

Unto me.

But to friends and nodding neighbours,

Fellow-wights in lot and labours,

Who descry the times as I,

No such lucid legend tells

Where she dwells.

Should I lapse to what I was

Ere we met ;

(Such will not be, but because

Some forget

Let me feign it)—none would notice.

That where she I know by rote is

Spread a strange and withering change,

Like a drying of the wells

Where she dwells.

To feel I might have kissed—

Loved as true—

Otherwhere, nor Mine have missed

My life through,

Had I never wandered near her,  
Is a smart severe—severer  
In the thought that she is nought,  
Even as I, beyond the dells  
Where she dwells.

And Devotion droops her glance  
To recall  
What bond-servants of Chance  
We are all.

I but found her in that, going  
On my errant path unknowing,  
I did not out-skirt the spot  
That no spot on earth excels,  
—Where she dwells!

1870.







## THE SERGEANT'S SONG

(1803)

WHEN Lawyers strive to heal a breach,  
And Parsons practise what they  
preach ;

Then Boney he'll come pouncing down,  
And march his men on London town !

Rollicum-rorum, tol-lol-lorum,  
Rollicum-rorum, tol-lol-lay !

When Justices hold equal scales,  
And Rogues are only found in jails ;

Then Boney he'll come pouncing down,  
And march his men on London town !  
    Rollicum-rorum, &c.

When Rich Men find their wealth a curse,  
And fill therewith the Poor Man's purse ;  
Then Boney he'll come pouncing down,  
And march his men on London town !  
    Rollicum-rorum, &c.

When Husbands with their Wives agree,  
And Maids won't wed from modesty ;  
Then Boney he'll come pouncing down,  
And march his men on London town !  
    Rollicum-rorum, tol-lol-lorum,  
    Rollicum-rorum, tol-lol-lay !

1878.

*Published in "The Trumpet-Major," 1880.*



## VALENCIENNES

(1793)

By CORP'L TULLIDGE in "*The Trumpet-Major*"

IN MEMORY OF S. C. (PENSIONER). DIED 184-

WE trenched, we trumpeted and  
drummed,

And from our mortars tons of iron  
hummed

Ath'art the ditch, the month we bombed  
The Town o' Valencieën.

'Twas in the June o' Ninety-dree  
(The Duke o' Yark our then Commander  
beën)

The German Legion, Guards, and we  
Laid siege to Valencieën.

This was the first time in the war  
That French and English spilled each other's  
gore ;  
—Few dreamt how far would roll the roar  
Begun at Valencieën !

'Twas said that we'd no business there  
A-topperèn the French for disagreeën ;  
However, that's not my affair—  
We were at Valencieën.

Such snocks and slats, since war began  
Never knew raw recruit or veteràn :  
Stone-deaf therence went many a man  
Who served at Valencieën.

Into the streets, ath'art the sky,  
 A hundred thousand balls and bombs were  
     fleën ;  
 And harmless townsfolk fell to die  
     Each hour at Valencieën !

And, sweatèn wi' the bombardiers,  
 A shell was slent to shards anighst my ears :  
     —'Twas nigh the end of hopes and fears  
     For me at Valencieën !

They bore my wounded frame to camp,  
 And shut my gapèn skull, and washed en  
     cleän,  
 And jined en wi' a zilver clamp  
     Thik night at Valencieën.

“ We've fetched en back to quick from  
     dead ;  
 But never more on earth while rose is red  
     Will drum rouse Corpel ! ” Doctor said  
     O' me at Valencieën.

'Twer true. No voice o' friend or foe  
Can reach me now, or any livèn beën ;  
And little have I power to know  
Since then at Valencieën !

I never hear the zummer hums  
O' bees ; and don' know when the cuckoo  
comes ;  
But night and day I hear the bombs  
We threw at Valencieën. . . .

As for the Duke o' Yark in war,  
There may be volk whose judgment o' en is  
meän ;  
But this I say—he was not far  
From great at Valencieën.

O' wild wet nights, when all seems sad,  
My wownds come back, as though new wownds  
I'd had ;  
But yet—at times I'm sort o' glad  
I fout at Valencieën.

Well : Heaven wi' its jasper halls  
Is now the on'y Town I care to be in. . . .  
Good Lord, if Nick should bomb the walls  
As we did Valencieën !

1878-1897.





## SAN SEBASTIAN

(*August 1813*)

WITH THOUGHTS OF SERGEANT M—— (PENSIONER),  
WHO DIED 185—

“**W**HY, Sergeant, stray on the Ivel  
Way,

As though at home there were spectres  
rife ?

From first to last 'twas a proud career !  
And your sunny years with a gracious wife  
Have brought you a daughter dear.

"I watched her to-day ; a more comely maid,  
As she danced in her muslin bowed with blue,  
Round a Hintock maypole never gayed."

—"Aye, aye ; I watched her this day, too,  
As it happens," the Sergeant said.

"My daughter is now," he again began,  
"Of just such an age as one I knew  
When we of the Line, the Forlorn-hope van,  
On an August morning—a chosen few—  
Stormed San Sebastian.

"She's a score less three ; so about was *she*—  
The maiden I wronged in Peninsular days. . . .  
You may prate of your prowess in lusty times,  
But as years gnaw inward you blink your bays,  
And see too well your crimes !

"We'd stormed it at night, by the flapping light  
Of burning towers, and the mortar's boom :  
We'd topped the breach ; but had failed to stay,  
For our files were misled by the baffling gloom ;  
And we said we'd storm by day.





“So, out of the trenches, with features set,  
On that hot, still morning, in measured pace,  
Our column climbed ; climbed higher yet,  
Past the fauss’bray, scarp, up the curtain-face,  
And along the parapet.

“From the battered hornwork the cannoneers  
Hove crashing balls of iron fire ;  
On the shaking gap mount the volunteers  
In files, and as they mount expire  
Amid curses, groans, and cheers.

“Five hours did we storm, five hours re-form,  
As Death cooled those hot blood pricked on ;  
Till our cause was helped by a woe within :  
They were blown from the summit we’d leapt  
upon,  
And madly we entered in.

“On end for plunder, ’mid rain and thunder  
That burst with the lull of our cannonade,  
We vamped the streets in the stifling air—  
Our hunger unsoothed, our thirst unstayed—  
And ransacked the buildings there.

“From the shady vaults of their walls of  
white

We rolled rich puncheons of Spanish grape,  
Till at length, with the fire of the wine alight,  
I saw at a doorway a fair fresh shape—

A woman, a sylph, or sprite.

“Afeard she fled, and with heated head  
I pursued to the chamber she called her  
own ;

—When might is right no qualms deter,  
And having her helpless and alone

I wreaked my will on her.

“She raised her beseeching eyes to me,  
And I heard the words of prayer she sent  
In her own soft language. . . . Fatefully  
I copied those eyes for my punishment

In begetting the girl you see !

“So, to-day I stand with a God-set brand  
Like Cain’s, when he wandered from kindred’s  
ken. . . .

I served through the war that made Europe  
free ;

I wived me in peace-year. But, hid from men,  
I bear that mark on me.

“ Maybe we shape our offspring’s guise  
From fancy, or we know not what,  
And that no deep impression dies,—  
For the mother of my child is not  
The mother of her eyes.

“ And I nightly stray on the Ivel Way  
As though at home there were spectres rife ;  
I delight me not in my proud career ;  
And ’tis coals of fire that a gracious wife  
Should have brought me a daughter  
dear ! ”





## THE STRANGER'S SONG

*(As sung by MR. CHARLES CHARRINGTON in the play of  
"The Three Wayfarers")*

O MY trade it is the rarest one,  
Simple shepherds all—

My trade is a sight to see ;  
For my customers I tie, and take 'em up on  
high,  
And waft 'em to a far countree !

My tools are but common ones,  
Simple shepherds all—

My tools are no sight to see :  
A little hempen string, and a post whereon to  
swing,  
Are implements enough for me !

To-morrow is my working day,  
Simple shepherds all—  
To-morrow is a working day for me :  
For the farmer's sheep is slain, and the lad  
who did it ta'en,  
And on his soul may God ha' mer-cy!

*Printed in "The Three Strangers," 1833.*



## THE BURGHERS

(17—)

THE sun had wheeled from Grey's to  
Dammer's Crest,  
And still I mused on that Thing imminent :  
At length I sought the High-streef to the  
West.

The level flare raked pane and pediment  
And my wrecked face, and shaped my near-  
ing friend  
Like one of those the Furnace held unshent.

“I’ve news concerning her,” he said. “Attend.  
They fly to-night at the late moon’s first  
gleam :  
Watch with thy steel : two righteous thrusts  
will end

Her shameless visions and his passioned dream.  
I’ll watch with thee, to testify thy wrong—  
To aid, maybe.—Law consecrates the scheme.”

I started, and we paced the flags along  
Till I replied : “Since it has come to this  
I’ll do it ! But alone. I can be strong.”

Three hours past Curfew, when the Froom’s  
mild hiss  
Reigned sole, undulled by whirr of merchan-  
dize,  
From Pummery-Tout to where the Gibbet is,

I crossed my pleasaunce hard by Glyd'path  
Rise,  
And stood beneath the wall. Eleven strokes  
went,  
And to the door they came, contrariwise,

And met in clasp so close I had but bent  
My lifted blade on either to have let  
Their two souls loose upon the firmament.

But something held my arm. "A moment  
yet  
As pray-time ere you wantons die!" I said;  
And then they saw me. Swift her gaze was  
set

With eye and cry of love illimited  
Upon her Heart-king. Never upon me  
Had she thrown look of love so thorough-  
sped! . . .

At once she flung her faint form shieldingly  
On his, against the vengeance of my vows;  
The which o'erruling, her shape shielded he.

Blanked by such love, I stood as in a  
drowse,  
And the slow moon edged from the upland  
nigh,  
My sad thoughts moving thuswise: "I may  
house

And I may husband her, yet what am I  
But licensed tyrant to this bonded pair?  
Says Charity, Do as ye would be done by." . . .

Hurling my iron to the bushes there,  
I bade them stay. And, as if brain and  
breast  
Were passive, they walked with me to the  
stair.

Inside the house none watched; and on we  
prest  
Before a mirror, in whose gleam I read  
Her beauty, his,—and mine own mien un-  
blest;

Till at her room I turned. "Madam," I  
said,

"Have you the wherewithal for this? Pray  
speak.

Love fills no cupboard. You'll need daily  
bread."

"We've nothing, sire," she lipped; "and nothing  
seek.

'Twere base in me to rob my lord unaware;  
Our hands will earn a pittance week by  
week."

And next I saw she had piled her raiment rare  
Within the garde-robcs, and her household  
purse,

Her jewels, her least lace of personal wear;

And stood in homespun. Now grown wholly  
hers,

I handed her the gold, her jewels all,  
And him the choicest of her robes diverse.

"I'll take you to the doorway in the wall,  
And then adieu," I told them. "Friends, with-  
draw."

They did so ; and she went—beyond recall.

And as I paused beneath the arch I saw  
Their moonlit figures—slow, as in surprise—  
Descend the slope, and vanish on the haw.

"'Fool,' some will say," I thought. "But  
who is wise,  
Save God alone, to weigh my reasons why?"  
—"Hast thou struck home?" came with the  
boughs' night-sighs.

It was my friend. "I have struck well.  
They fly,  
But carry wounds that none can cicatrize."  
—"Not mortal?" said he. "Lingering—  
worse," said I.



## LEIPZIG

(1813)

*Scene : The Master-tradesmen's Parlour at the Old  
Ship Inn, Casterbridge. Evening.*

“ O LD Norbert with the flat blue cap—  
A German said to be—  
Why let your pipe die on your lap,  
Your eyes blink absently ? ”

—“ Ah ! . . . Well, I had thought till my cheek  
was wet

Of my mother—her voice and mien  
When she used to sing and pirouette,  
And tap the tambourine

“To the march that yon street-fiddler plies :

She told me 'twas the same

She'd heard from the trumpets, when the  
Allies

Burst on her home like flame.

“My father was one of the German Hussars,

My mother of Leipzig ; but he,

Being quartered here, fetched her at close of  
the wars,

And a Wessex lad reared me.

“And as I grew up, again and again

She'd tell, after trilling that air,

Of her youth, and the battles on Leipzig  
plain

And of all that was suffered there ! . . .

“—'Twas a time of alarms. Three Chiefs-  
at-arms

Combined them to crush One,

And by numbers' might, for in equal fight

He stood the matched of none.

“ Carl Schwarzenberg was of the plot,  
And Blücher, prompt and prow,  
And Jean the Crown-Prince Bernadotte :  
Buonaparte was the foe.

“ City and plain had felt his reign  
From the North to the Middle Sea,  
And he'd now sat down in the noble town  
Of the King of Saxony.

“ October's deep dew its wet gossamer threw  
Upon Leipzig's lawns, leaf-strewn,  
Where lately each fair avenue  
Wrought shade for summer noon.

“ To westward two dull rivers crept  
Through miles of marsh and slough,  
Whereover a streak of whiteness swept—  
The Bridge of Lindenau.

“ Hard by, in the City, the One, care-tossed,  
Sat pondering his shrunken power ;  
And without the walls the hemming host  
Waxed denser every hour.

“He had speech that night on the morrow’s  
designs

With his chiefs by the bivouac fire,  
While the belt of flames from the enemy’s  
lines

Flared nigher him yet and nigher.

“Three rockets then from the girdling  
trine

Told, ‘Ready!’ As they rose  
Their flashes seemed his Judgment-Sign  
For bleeding Europe’s woes.

“’Twas seen how the French watch-fires that  
night

Glowed still and steadily ;  
And the Three rejoiced, for they read in the  
sight

That the One disdained to flee. . . .

“—Five hundred guns began the affray

On next day morn at nine ;  
Such mad and mangling cannon-play  
Had never torn human line.

“Around the town three battles beat,  
Contracting like a gin ;  
As nearer marched the million feet  
Of columns closing in.

“The first battle nighed on the low Southern  
side ;  
The second by the Western way ;  
The nearing of the third on the North was  
heard :  
—The French held all at bay.

“Against the first band did the Emperor stand ;  
Against the second stood Ney ;  
Marmont against the third gave the order-  
word :  
—Thus raged it throughout the day.

“Fifty thousand sturdy souls on those trampled  
plains and knolls,  
Who met the dawn hopefully,  
And were lotted their shares in a quarrel not  
theirs,  
Dropt then in their agony.

“‘O,’ the old folks said, ‘ye Preachers  
stern!

O so-called Christian time !

When will men’s swords to ploughshares turn ?

When come the promised prime ?’ . . .

“—The clash of horse and man which that  
day began,

Closed not as evening wore ;

And the morrow’s armies, rear and van,

Still mustered more and more.

“From the City towers the Confederate  
Powers

Were eyed in glittering lines,

And up from the vast a murmuring passed

As from a wood of pines.

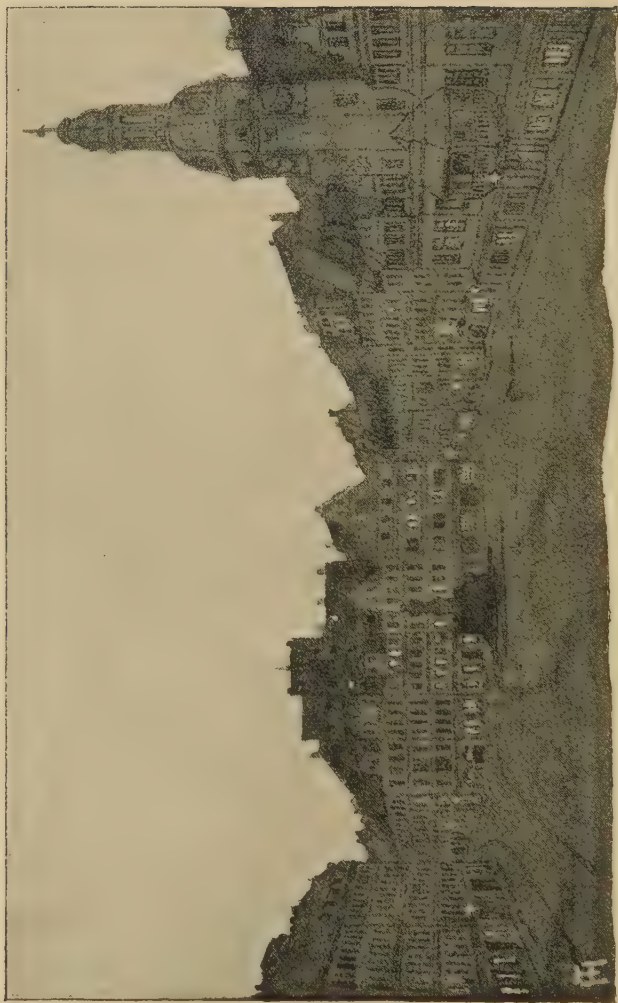
“‘Tis well to cover a feeble skill

By numbers’ might !’ scoffed He ;

‘But give me a third of their strength, I’d fill

Half Hell with their soldiery !’







“All that day raged the war they waged,  
And again dumb night held reign,  
Save that ever upspread from the dank death-  
bed  
A miles-wide pant of pain.

“Hard had striven brave Ney, the true  
Bertrand,  
Victor, and Augereau,  
Bold Poniatowski, and Lauriston,  
To stay their overthrow ;

“But, as in the dream of one sick to death  
There comes a narrowing room  
That pens him, body and limbs and breath.  
To wait a hideous doom,

“So to Napoleon, in the hush  
That held the town and towers  
Through these dire nights, a creeping  
crush  
Seemed borne in with the hours.

“One road to the rearward, and but one,  
Did fitful Chance allow ;  
’Twas where the Pleiss’ and Elster run—  
The Bridge of Lindenau.

“The nineteenth dawned. Down street and  
Platz  
The wasted French sank back,  
Stretching long lines across the Flats  
And on the bridgeway track :

“When there surged on the sky an earthen  
wave,  
And stones, and men, as though  
Some rebel churchyard crew updrave  
Their sepulchres from below.

“To Heaven is blown Bridge Lindenau ;  
Wrecked regiments reel therefrom ;  
And rank and file in masses plough  
The sullen Elster-Strom.

“A gulf was Lindenau ; and dead  
Were fifties, hundreds, tens ;  
And every current rippled red  
With Marshal's blood and men's.

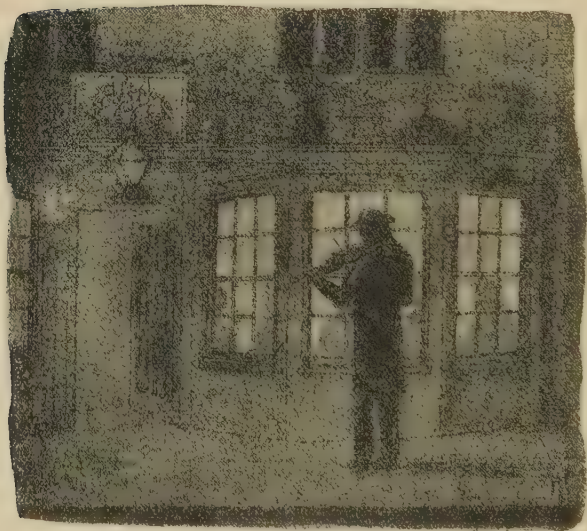
“The smart Macdonald swam therein,  
And barely won the verge ;  
Bold Poniatowski plunged him in  
Never to re-emerge.

“Then stayed the strife. The remnants  
wound  
Their Rhineward way pell-mell ;  
And thus did Leipzig City sound  
An Empire's passing bell ;

“While in cavalcade, with band and blade,  
Came Marshals, Princes, Kings ;  
And the town was theirs. . . . Ay, as  
simple maid,  
My mother saw these things !

“And whenever those notes in the street  
begin,

I recall her, and that far scene,  
And her acting of how the Allies marched in,  
And her tap of the tambourine!”



## THE PEASANT'S CONFESSION

“Si le maréchal Grouchy avait été rejoint par l'officier que Napoléon lui avait expédié la veille à dix heures du soir, toute question eût disparu. Mais cet officier n'était point parvenu à sa destination, ainsi que le maréchal n'a cessé de l'affirmer toute sa vie, et il faut l'en croire, car autrement il n'aurait eu aucune raison pour hésiter. Cet officier avait-il été pris ? avait-il passé à l'ennemi ? C'est ce qu'on a toujours ignoré.”

—THIERS: *Histoire de l'Empire*. “Waterloo.”

GOOD Father ! . . . It was eve in middle  
June,  
And war was waged anew,  
By great Napoleon, who for years had strewn  
Men's bones all Europe through.

Three nights ere this, with columned corps  
he'd cross'd

The Sambre at Charleroi,  
To move on Brussels, where the English host  
Dallied in Parc and Bois.

The yestertide we'd heard the gloomy gun  
Growl through the long-sunned day  
From Quatre-Bras and Ligny ; till the dun  
Twilight suppressed the fray ;

Albeit therein—as lated tongues bespoke—  
Brunswick's high heart was drained,  
And Prussia's Line and Landwehr, though  
unbroke,  
Stood cornered and constrained.

And at next noon-time Grouchy slowly passed  
With thirty thousand men :  
We hoped thenceforth no army, small or  
vast,  
Would trouble us again.

My hut lay deeply in a vale recessed,  
And never a soul seemed nigh  
When, reassured at length, we went to rest—  
My children, wife, and I.

But what was this that broke our humble  
ease?

What noise, above the rain,  
Above the dripping of the poplar trees  
That smote along the pane?

—A call of mastery, bidding me arise,  
Compelled me to the door,  
At which a horseman stood in martial  
guise—  
Splashed—sweating from every pore.

Had I seen Grouchy? Yes? Which track  
took he?

Could I lead thither on?—  
Fulfilment would ensure much gold for me,  
Perhaps more gifts anon.

"I bear the Emperor's mandate," then he  
said,

"Charging the Marshal straight  
To strike between the double host ahead  
Ere they co-operate,

"Engaging Blücher till the Emperor put  
Lord Wellington to flight,  
And next the Prussians. This to set afoot  
Is my emprise to-night."

I joined him in the mist; but, pausing, sought  
To estimate his say.

Grouchy had made for Wavre; and yet, on  
thought,

I did not lead that way.

I mused: "If Grouchy thus and thus be told,  
The clash comes sheer hereon;  
My farm is stript. While, as for gifts of  
gold,  
Money the French have none.



“Grouchy unwarned, moreo’er, the English  
win,

And mine is left to me—

They buy, not borrow.”—Hence did I begin  
To lead him treacherously.

And as we edged Joidoigne with cautious view

Dawn pierced the humid air ;

And still I easted with him, though I knew

Never marched Grouchy there.

Near Ottignies we passed, across the Dyle

(Lim’lette left far aside),

And thence direct toward Pervez and Noville

Through green grain, till he cried :

“I doubt thy conduct, man ! no track is  
here—

I doubt thy gagèd word !”

Thereat he scowled on me, and prancing  
near,

He pricked me with his sword.

“Nay, Captain, hold ! We skirt, not trace  
the course

Of Grouchy,” said I then :

“As we go, yonder went he, with his force  
Of thirty thousand men.”

—At length noon nighed ; when west, from  
Saint-John’s-Mound,

A hoarse artillery boomed,

And from Saint-Lambert’s upland, chapel-  
crowned,

The Prussian squadrons loomed.

Then leaping to the wet wild path we had  
kept,

“My mission fails !” he cried ;

“Too late for Grouchy now to intercept,  
For, peasant, you have lied !”

He turned to pistol me. I sprang, and drew  
The sabre from his flank,

And ’twixt his nape and shoulder, ere he knew.

I struck, and dead he sank.





I hid him deep in nodding rye and oat—  
His shroud green stalks and loam ;  
His requiem the corn-blade's husky note—  
And then I hastened home. . . .

—Two armies writhe in coils of red and  
blue,  
And brass and iron clang  
From Goumont, past the front of Waterloo.  
To Pap'lotte and Smohain.

The Guard Imperial wavered on the height ;  
The Emperor's face grew glum ;  
"I sent," he said, "to Grouchy yesternight,  
And yet he does not come !"

'Twas then, Good Father, that the French  
espied,  
Streaking the summer land,  
The men of Blücher. But the Emperor  
cried,  
"Grouchy is now at hand !"

And meanwhile Vand'leur, Vivian, Maitland,  
Kempt,  
Met d'Erlon, Friant, Ney ;  
But Grouchy—mis-sent, blamed, yet blame-  
exempt—  
Grouchy was far away.

By even, slain or struck, Michel the strong,  
Bold Travers, Dnop, Delord,  
Smart Guyot, Reil-le, l'Heriter, Friant,  
Scattered that champaign o'er.

Fallen likewise wronged Duhesme, and skilled  
Lobau  
Did that red sunset see ;  
Colbert, Legros, Blancard ! . . . . And of  
the foe  
Picton and Ponsonby ;

With Gordon, Canning, Blackman, Ompteda,  
L'Estrange, Delancey, Packe,  
Grose, D'Oyly, Stables, Morice, Howard, Hay,  
Von Schwerin, Watzdorf, Boek,

Smith, Phelips, Fuller, Lind, and Bat-  
tersby,

And hosts of ranksmen round . . . . .  
Memorials linger yet to speak to thee  
Of those that bit the ground !

The Guards' last column yielded ; dykes of  
dead

Lay between vale and ridge,  
As, thinned yet closing, faint yet fierce, they  
sped  
In packs to Genappe Bridge.

Safe was my stock ; my capple cow unslain ;  
Intact each cock and hen ;  
But Grouchy far at Wavre all day had lain,  
And thirty thousand men.

O Saints, had I but lost my earing corn  
And saved the cause once prized !  
O Saints, why such false witness had I  
borne  
When late I'd sympathized ! . . .

So now, being old, my children eye askance  
    My slowly dwindling store,  
And crave my mite ; till, worn with tarriance,  
    I care for life no more.

To Almighty God henceforth I stand con-  
    fessed,  
    And Virgin-Saint Marie ;  
O Michael, John, and Holy Ones in rest,  
    Entreat the Lord for me !





## THE ALARM

(TRADITIONAL)

IN MEMORY OF ONE OF THE WRITER'S FAMILY WHO WAS A  
VOLUNTEER DURING THE WAR WITH NAPOLEON

IN a ferny byway  
Near the great South - Wessex  
Highway,  
A homestead raised its breakfast-smoke aloft;  
The dew-damps still lay steamless, for the sun  
had made no skyway,  
And twilight cloaked the croft.

It was almost past conceiving  
Here, where woodbines hung inweaving,  
That quite closely hostile armaments might  
steer,  
Save from seeing in the porchway a fair  
woman mutely grieving,  
And a harnessed Volunteer.

In haste he'd flown there  
To his comely wife alone there,  
While marching south hard by, to still her  
fears,  
For she soon would be a mother, and few  
messengers were known there  
In these campaigning years.

'Twas time to be Good-bying,  
Since the assembly-hour was nighing  
In royal George's town at six that  
morn ;  
And betwixt its wharves and this retreat were  
ten good miles of hieing  
Ere ring of bugle-horn.

“I’ve laid in food, Dear,  
And broached the spiced and brewed,  
Dear;

And if our July hope should antedate,  
Let the char-wench mount and gallop by the  
halterpath and wood, Dear,  
And fetch assistance straight.

“As for Buonaparte, forget him ;  
He’s not like to land ! But let him,  
Those strike with aim who strike for wives  
and sons !  
And the war-boats built to float him ; ’twere  
but wanted to upset him  
A slat from Nelson’s guns !

“But, to assure thee,  
And of creeping fears to cure thee,  
If he *should* be rumoured anchoring in the  
Road,  
Drive with the nurse to Kingsbere ; and let  
nothing thence allure thee  
Till we have him safe-bestowed.

“Now, to turn to marching matters :—  
I’ve my knapsack, firelock, spatters,  
Crossbelts, priming-horn, stock, bay’net,  
blackball, clay,  
Pouch, magazine, and flint-box that at every  
quick-step clatters ;—  
    . . . My heart, Dear ; that must  
    stay !”

—With breathings broken  
Farewell was kissed unspoken,  
And they parted there as morning stroked  
the panes ;  
And the Volunteer went on, and turned, and  
twirled his glove for token,  
And took the coastward lanes.

When above He’th Hills he found him,  
He saw, on gazing round him,  
The Barrow - Beacon burning — burning  
low,  
As if, perhaps, enkindled ever since he’d home-  
ward bound him ;  
And it meant : Expect the Foe !





Leaving the byway,  
He entered on the highway,  
Where were cars and chariots, faring fast  
inland ;  
“He’s anchored, Soldier!” shouted some: “God  
save thee, marching thy way,  
Th’lt front him on the strand !”

He slowed ; he stopped ; he paltered  
Awhile with self, and faltered,  
“Why courting misadventure shoreward  
roam ?  
To Molly, surely ! Seek the woods with her  
till times have altered ;  
Charity favours home.

“ Else, my denying  
He’d come, she’ll read as lying—  
Think the Barrow-Beacon must have met  
my eyes—  
That my words were not unwareness, but  
deceit of her, while vying  
In deeds that jeopardize.

“At home is stocked provision,  
And to-night, without suspicion,  
We might bear it with us to a covert  
near ;  
Such sin, to save a childing wife, would earn  
it Christ’s remission,  
Though none forgive it here !”

While he stood thinking,  
A little bird, perched drinking  
Among the crowfoot tufts the river  
bore,  
Was tangled in their stringy arms and  
fluttered, almost sinking  
Near him, upon the moor.

He stepped in, reached, and seized it,  
And, preening, had released it  
But that a thought of Holy Writ oc-  
curred,  
And Signs Divine ere battle, till it seemed  
him Heaven had pleased it  
As guide to send the bird.



“O Lord, direct me ! . . . .”

Doth Duty now expect me  
To march a-coast, or guard my weak ones  
near ?

Give this bird a flight according, that I thence  
learn to elect me.

The southward or the rear.”

He loosed his clasp ; when, rising,  
The bird—as if surmising—  
Bore due to southward, crossing by the  
Froom,  
And Durnover Great Field and Fort, the  
soldier clear advising—

Prompted he deemed by Whom.

Then on he panted  
By grim Mai-Don, and slanted  
Up the steep Ridge-way, hearkening be-  
tween whiles ;  
Till nearing coast and harbour he beheld the  
shore-line planted  
With Foot and Horse for miles.

Mistrusting not the omen,  
He gained the beach, where Yeomen,  
Militia, Fencibles and Pikemen bold,  
With Regulars in thousands, were enmassed  
to meet the Foemen,  
Whose fleet had not yet shoaled.

Captain and Colonel,  
Sere Generals, Ensigns vernal,  
Were there ; of neighbour-natives, Michel,  
Smith,  
Meggs, Bingham, Gambier, Cunningham,  
to face the said nocturnal  
Swoop on their land and kith.

But Buonaparte still tarried ;  
His project had miscarried ;  
At the last hour, equipped for victory,  
The fleet had paused ; his subtle combinations  
had been parried  
By British strategy.

Homeward returning  
Anon, no beacons burning,  
No alarms, the Volunteer, in modest bliss,  
Te Deum sang with wife and friends : " We  
praise Thee, Lord, discerning  
That Thou hast helped in this ! "



## HER DEATH AND AFTER

THE summons was urgent: and forth I  
went—

By the way of the Western Wall, so drear  
On that winter night, and sought a gate,  
Where one, by Fate,  
Lay dying that I held dear.

And there, as I paused by her tenement,  
And the trees shed on me their rime and hoar,  
I thought of the man who had left her lone—  
Him who made her his own  
When I loved her, long before.

The rooms within had the piteous shine  
That home-things wear when there's aught  
amiss ;

From the stairway floated the rise and fall  
Of an infant's call,  
Whose birth had brought her to this.

Her life was the price she would pay for that  
whine—

For a child by the man she did not love.

“But let that rest for ever,” I said,

And bent my tread  
To the bedchamber above.

She took my hand in her thin white own,  
And smiled her thanks—though nigh too  
weak—

And made them a sign to leave us there,  
Then faltered, ere  
She could bring herself to speak.

“Just to see you—before I go—he'll condone  
Such a natural thing now my time's not  
much—

When Death is so near it hustles hence

All passioned sense

Between woman and man as such !

“ My husband is absent. As heretofore

The City detains him. But, in truth,

He has not been kind. . . . I will speak no  
blame,

But—the child is lame ;

O, I pray she may reach his ruth !

“ Forgive past days—I can say no more—

Maybe had we wed you would now repine ! . . .

But I treated you ill. I was punished. Fare-  
well !

—Truth shall I tell ?

Would the child were yours and mine !

“ As a wife I was true. But, such my  
unease

That, could I insert a deed back in Time,

I'd make her yours, to secure your care ;

And the scandal bear,

And the penalty for the crime !”

—When I had left, and the swinging trees  
Rang above me, as lauding her candid say,  
Another was I. Her words were enough :

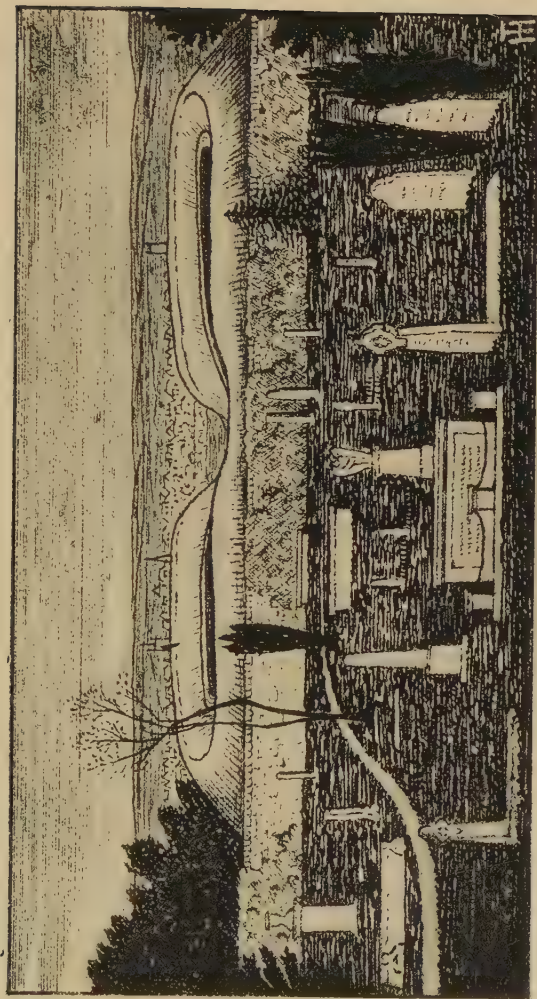
Came smooth, came rough,  
I felt I could live my day.

Next night she died ; and her obsequies .  
In the Field of Tombs where the earthworks  
frowned  
Had her husband's heed. His tendance spent,  
I often went  
And pondered by her mound.

All that year and the next year whiled,  
And I still went thitherward in the gloam ;  
But the Town forgot her and her nook,  
And her husband took  
Another Love to his home.

And the rumour flew that the lame lone  
child  
Whom she wished for its safety child of  
mine,







Was treated ill when offspring came  
Of the new-made dame,  
And marked a more vigorous line.

A smarter grief within me wrought  
Than even at loss of her so dear—  
That the being whose soul my soul suffused  
Had a child ill-used,  
While I dared not interfere !

One eve as I stood at my spot of thought  
In the white-stoned Garth, brooding thus her  
wrong,  
Her husband neared ; and to shun his nod  
By her hallowed sod  
I went from the tombs among

To the Cirque of the Gladiators which  
faced—  
That haggard mark of Imperial Rome,  
Whose Pagan echoes mock the chime  
Of our Christian time  
From its hollows of chalk and loam.

The sun's gold touch was scarce displaced  
From the vast Arena where men once  
bled,

When her husband followed ; bowed ; half-  
passed

With lip upcast ;  
Then halting sullenly said :

“It is noised that you visit my first wife's  
tomb.

Now, I gave her an honoured name to bear  
While living, when dead. So I've claim to ask  
By what right you task  
My patience by vigiling there ?

“There's decency even in death, I assume ;  
Preserve it, sir, and keep away ;  
For the mother of my first-born you  
Show mind undue !  
—Sir, I've nothing more to say.”

A desperate stroke discerned I then—  
God pardon—or pardon not—the lie ;

She had sighed that she wished (lest the child  
should pine

Of slights) 'twere mine,  
So I said : " But the father I.

" That you thought it yours is the way of  
men ;

But I won her troth long ere your day :  
You learnt how, in dying, she summoned me?  
'Twas in fealty.

—Sir, I've nothing more to say,

" Save that, if you'll hand me my little maid,  
I'll take her, and rear her, and spare you toil.  
Think it more than a friendly act none can ;

I'm a lonely man,  
While you've a large pot to boil.

" If not, and you'll put it to ball or blade—  
To-night, to-morrow night, anywhen—  
I'll meet you here. . . . But think of it,  
And in season fit

Let me hear from you again."

—Well, I went away, hoping ; but nought I  
heard

Of my stroke for the child, till there greeted  
me

A little voice that one day came

To my window-frame

And babbled innocently :

“My father who's not my own, sends  
word

I'm to stay here, sir, where I belong !”

Next a writing came : “Since the child was  
the fruit

Of your lawless suit,

Pray take her, to right a wrong.”

And I did. And I gave the child my love,  
And the child loved me, and estranged us  
none.

But compunctions loomed ; for I'd harmed  
the dead

By what I said

For the good of the living one.

—Yet though, God wot, I am sinner enough,  
And unworthy the woman who drew me so,  
Perhaps this wrong for her darling's good  
    She forgives, or would,  
If only she could know !









## THE DANCE AT THE PHOENIX

**T**O Jenny came a gentle youth  
From inland leazes lone,  
His love was fresh as apple-blood  
By Parrett, Yeo, or Tone.  
And duly he entreated her  
To be his tender minister,  
And take him for her own.

Now Jenny's life had hardly been  
A life of modesty ;  
And few in Casterbridge had seen  
More loves of sorts than she

From scarcely sixteen years above ;  
Among them sundry troopers of  
The King's-Own Cavalry.

But each with charger, sword, and gun,  
Had bluffed the Biscay wave ;  
And Jenny prized her rural one  
For all the love he gave.  
She vowed to be, if they were wed,  
His honest wife in heart and head  
From bride-ale hour to grave.

Wedded they were. Her husband's trust  
In Jenny knew no bound,  
And Jenny kept her pure and just,  
Till even malice found  
No sin or sign of ill to be  
In one who walked so decently  
The duteous helpmate's round.

Two sons were born, and bloomed to men,  
And roamed, and were as not :  
Alone was Jenny left again  
As ere her mind had sought

A solace in domestic joys,  
 And ere the vanished pair of boys  
     Were sent to sun her cot.

She numbered near on sixty years,  
     And passed as elderly,  
 When, on a day, with flushing fears,  
     She learnt from shouts of glee,  
 And shine of swords, and thump of drum,  
 Her early loves from war had come,  
     The King's-Own Cavalry.

She turned aside, and bowed her head  
     Anigh Saint Peter's door ;  
 "Alas for chastened thoughts !" she said ;  
     "I'm faded now, and hoar,  
 And yet those notes—they thrill me through,  
 And those gay forms move me anew  
     As they moved me of yore !" . . .

'Twas Christmas, and the Phœnix Inn  
     Was lit with tapers tall,  
 For thirty of the trooper men  
     Had vowed to give a ball

As "Theirs" had done ('twas handed down)  
 When lying in the selfsame town  
     Ere Buonaparté's fall.

That night the throbbing "Soldier's Joy,"  
     The measured tread and sway  
 Of "Fancy-Lad" and "Maiden Coy,"  
     Reached Jenny as she lay  
 Beside her spouse ; till springtide blood  
 Seemed scouring through her like a flood  
     That whisked the years away.

She rose, arrayed, and decked her head  
     Where the bleached hairs grew thin ;  
 Upon her cap two bows of red  
     She fixed with hasty pin ;  
 Unheard descending to the street  
 She trod the flags with tune-led feet,  
     And stood before the Inn.

Save for the dancers', not a sound  
     Disturbed the icy air ;  
 No watchman on his midnight round  
     Or traveller was there ;

But over All-Saints', high and bright,  
 Pulsed to the music Sirius white,  
     The Wain by Bullstake Square.

She knocked, but found her further stride  
     Checked by a sergeant tall :  
 "Gay Granny, whence come you ?" he cried ;  
     "This is a private ball."  
 —"No one has more right here than me !  
 Ere you were born, man," answered she,  
     "I knew the regiment all !"

"Take not the lady's visit ill !"  
     The steward said ; "for see,  
 We lack sufficient partners still,  
     So, prithee, let her be !"  
 They seized and whirled her mid the maze,  
 And Jenny felt as in the days  
     Of her immodesty.

Hour chased each hour, and night advanced ;  
     She sped as shod with wings ;  
 Each time and every time she danced—  
     Reels, jigs, poussettes, and flings :

They cheered her as she soared and  
swooped,

(She had learnt ere art in dancing drooped  
From hops to slothful swings).

The favourite Quick - step "Speed the  
Plough"—

(Cross hands, cast off, and wheel)—

"The Triumph," "Sylph," "The Row-  
dow-dow,"

Famed "Major Malley's Reel,"

"The Duke of York's," "The Fairy Dance,"

"The Bridge of Lodi" (brought from  
France),

She beat out, toe and heel.

The "Fall of Paris" clanged its close,

And Peter's chime went four,

When Jenny, bosom-beating, rose

To seek her silent door.

They tiptoed in escorting her,

Lest stroke of heel or clink of spur

Should break her goodman's snore.

The fire that lately burnt fell slack  
    When lone at last was she ;  
Her nine-and-fifty years came back ;  
    She sank upon her knee  
Beside the durn, and like a dart  
A something arrowed through her heart  
    In shoots of agony.

Their footsteps died as she leant there,  
    Lit by the morning star  
Hanging above the moorland, where  
    The aged elm-rows are ;  
As overnight, from Pummery Ridge  
To Maembury Ring and Standfast Bridge  
    No life stirred, near or far.

Though inner mischief worked amain,  
    She reached her husband's side ;  
Where, toil-weary, as he had lain  
    Beneath the patchwork pied  
When forthward yestereve she crept,  
And as unwitting, still he slept  
    Who did in her confide.

A tear sprang as she turned and viewed  
     His features free from guile ;  
 She kissed him long, as when, just wooed,  
     She chose his domicile.  
 She felt she would give more than life  
 To be the single-hearted wife  
     That she had been erstwhile. . . .

Time wore to six. Her husband rose  
     And struck the steel and stone ;  
 He glanced at Jenny, whose repose  
     Seemed deeper than his own.  
 With dumb dismay, on closer sight,  
 He gathered sense that in the night,  
     Or morn, her soul had flown.

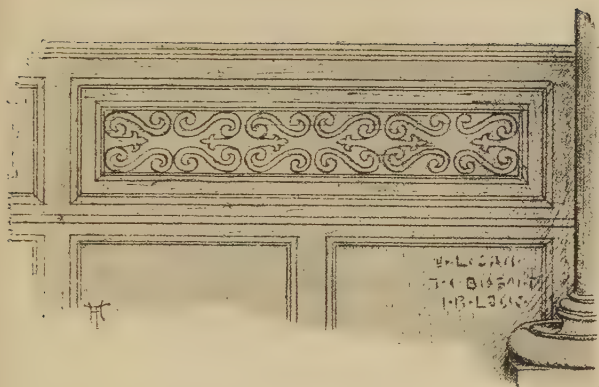
When told that some too mighty strain  
     For one so many-yearred  
 Had burst her bosom's master-vein,  
     His doubts remained unstirred.  
 His Jenny had not left his side  
 Betwixt the eve and morning-tide :  
     —The King's said not a word.



Well ! times are not as times were then,  
Nor fair ones half so free ;  
And truly they were martial men,  
The King's-Own Cavalry.  
And when they went from Casterbridge  
And vanished over Mellstock Ridge,  
'Twas saddest morn to see.







## THE CASTERBRIDGE CAPTAINS

(KHYBER PASS, 1842)

A TRADITION OF J. B. L—, T. G. B—, AND J. L—

**T**HREE captains went to Indian wars,  
And only one returned :  
Their mate of yore, he singly wore  
The laurels all had earned.

At home he sought the ancient aisle  
 Wherein, untrumped of fame,  
 The three had sat in pupilage,  
 And each had carved his name.

The names, rough-hewn, of equal size,  
 Stood on the panel still ;  
 Unequal since.—“ ’Twas theirs to aim,  
 Mine was it to fulfil ! ”

—“ Who saves his life shall lose it  
 friends ! ”

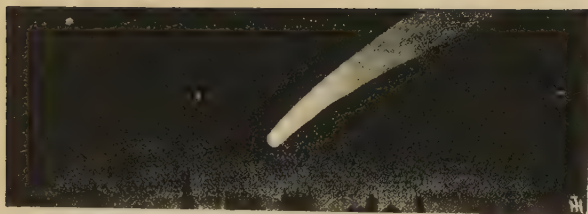
Outspake the preacher then,  
 Unweeting he his listener, who  
 Looked at the names again.

That he had come and they had been  
 stayed  
 Was but the chance of war :  
 Another chance, and they had been here,  
 And he had lain afar.

Yet saw he something in the lives  
Of those who had ceased to live  
That sphered them with a majesty  
Which living failed to give.

Transcendent triumph in return  
No longer lit his brain ;  
Transcendence rayed the distant urn  
Where slept the fallen twain.





## A SIGN-SEEKER

I MARK the months in liveries dank and dry,  
The noontides many-shaped and hued ;  
I see the nightfall shades subtrude,  
And hear the monotonous hours clang negligently by.

I view the evening bonfires of the sun  
On hills where morning rains have hissed ;  
The eyeless countenance of the mist  
Pallidly rising when the summer droughts  
are done.

I have seen the lightning-blade, the leaping  
star,

The cauldrons of the sea in storm,  
Have felt the earthquake's lifting arm,  
And trodden where abysmal fires and snow-  
cones are.

I learn to prophesy the hid eclipse,  
The coming of eccentric orbs ;  
To mete the dust the sky absorbs,  
To weigh the sun, and fix the hour each  
planet dips.

I witness fellow earth-men surge and strive ;  
Assemblies meet, and throb, and part ;  
Death's sudden finger, sorrow's smart ;  
—All the vast various moils that mean a  
world alive.

But that I fain would wot of shuns my sense—  
Those sights of which old prophets tell,  
Those signs the general word so well  
As vouchsafed their unheed, denied my long  
suspense.



In graveyard green, where his pale dust lies pent,  
To glimpse a phantom parent, friend,  
Wearing his smile, and "Not the end!"  
Outbreathing softly : that were blest enlighten-  
ment ;

Or, if a dead Love's lips, whom dreams reveal  
When midnight imps of King Decay  
Delve sly to solve me back to clay,  
Should leave some print to prove her spirit-  
kisses real ;

Or, when Earth's Frail lie bleeding of her  
Strong,  
If some Recorder, as in Writ,  
Near to the weary scene should flit  
And drop one plume as pledge that Heaven  
inscrolls the wrong

—There are who, rapt to heights of trancelike  
trust,  
These tokens claim to feel and see,  
Read radiant hints of times to be—  
Of heart to heart returning after dust to dust.

Such scope is granted not to lives like  
mine . . .

I have lain in dead men's beds, have  
walked

The tombs of those with whom I had talked,  
Called many a gone and goodly one to shape  
a sign,

And panted for response. But none replies ;  
No warnings loom, nor whisperings  
To open out my limitings,  
And Nescience mutely muses : When a man  
falls he lies.



## MY CICELY

(17—)

“**A**LIVE?”—And I leapt in my wonder,  
Was faint of my joyance,  
And grasses and grove shone in garments  
Of glory to me.

“She lives, in a plenteous well-being,  
To-day as aforehand ;  
The dead bore the name—though a rare  
one—  
The name that bore she.”

She lived . . . I, afar in the city  
Of frenzy-led factions,  
Had squandered green years and maturer  
In bowing the knee

To Baals illusive and specious,  
Till chance had there voiced me  
That one I loved vainly in nonage  
Had ceased her to be.

The passion the planets had scowled on,  
And change had let dwindle,  
Her death-rumour smartly relifted  
To full apogee.

I mounted a steed in the dawning  
With acheful remembrance,  
And made for the ancient West Highway  
To far Exonb'ry.

Passing heaths, and the House of Long  
Siegling,  
I neared the thin steeple

That tops the fair fane of Poore's olden  
Episcopal see ;

And, changing anew my blown bearer,  
I traversed the downland  
Whereon the bleak hill-graves of Chieftains  
Bulge barren of tree ;

And still sadly onward I followed  
That Highway the Icen,  
Which trails its pale riband down Wessex  
By lynchet and lea.

Along through the Stour-bordered Forum,  
Where Legions had wayfared,  
And where the slow river-face glasses  
Its green canopy,

And by Weatherbury Castle, and thencefrom  
Through Casterbridge held I  
Still on, to entomb her my mindsight  
Saw stretched pallidly.

No highwayman's trot blew the night-wind  
    To me so life-weary,  
But only the creak of a gibbet  
    Or waggoners' jee.

Triple-ramparted Maidon gloomed grayly  
    Above me from southward,  
And north the hill-fortress of Eggar,  
    And square Pummerie.

The Nine-Pillared Cromlech, the Bride-streams,  
    The Axe, and the Otter  
I passed, to the gate of the city  
    Where Exe scents the sea ;

Till, spent, in the graveacre pausing,  
    I learnt 'twas not *my* Love  
To whom Mother Church had just murmured  
    A last lullaby.

—"Then, where dwells the Canon's kins-  
    woman,  
My friend of aforetime ?"—

I asked, to disguise my heart-heavings  
And new ecstasy.

“She wedded.”—“Ah!”—“Wedded beneath  
her—

She keeps the stage-hostel  
Ten miles hence, beside the great Highway—  
The famed Lions-Three.

“Her spouse was her lackey—no option  
’Twixt wedlock and worse things ;  
A lapse over-sad for a lady  
Of her pedigree !”

I shuddered, said nothing, and wandered  
To shades of green laurel :  
More ghastly than death were these tidings  
Of life’s irony !

For, on my ride down I had halted  
Awhile at the Lions,  
And her—her whose name had once opened  
My heart as a key—

I'd looked on, unknowing, and witnessed  
Her jests with the tapsters,  
Her liquor-fired face, her thick accents  
In naming her fee.

“O God, why this seeming derision !”  
I cried in my anguish :  
“O once Loved, O fair Unforgotten—  
That Thing—meant it thee !

“Inurned and at peace, lost but sainted,  
Were grief I could compass ;  
Depraved—'tis for Christ's poor dependent  
A cruel decree !”

I backed on the Highway ; but passed not  
The hostel. Within there  
Too mocking to Love's re-expression  
Was Time's repartee !

Uptracking where Legions had wayfared  
By cromlechs unstoried,  
And lynchets, and sepultured Chieftains,  
In self-colloquy,



A feeling stirred in me and strengthened  
That *she* was not my Love,  
But she of the garth, who lay rapt in  
Her long reverie.

And thence till to-day I persuade me  
That this was the true one ;  
That Death stole intact her young dearness  
And innocence.

Frail-witted, illuded they call me ;  
I may be. Far better  
To dream than to own the debasement  
Of sweet Cicely.

Moreover I rate it unseemly  
To hold that kind Heaven  
Could work such device—to her ruin  
And my misery.

So, lest I disturb my choice vision,  
I shun the West Highway,  
Even now, when the knaps ring with rhythms  
From blackbird and bee ;

And feel that with slumber half-conscious  
She rests in the church-hay,  
Her spirit unsoiled as in youth-time  
When lovers were we.







## HER IMMORTALITY

UPON a noon I pilgrimed through  
A pasture, mile by mile,  
Unto the place where I last saw  
My dead Love's living smile.

And sorrowing I lay me down  
Upon the heated sod :  
It seemed as if my body pressed  
The very ground she trod.

I lay, and thought ; and in a trance  
    She came and stood thereby—  
The same, even to the marvellous ray  
    That used to light her eye.

“ You draw me, and I come to you,  
    My faithful one,” she said,  
In voice that had the moving tone  
    It bore ere she was wed.

“ Seven years have circled since I died :  
    Few now remember me ;  
My husband clasps another bride :  
    My children’s love has she.

“ My brethren, sisters, and my friends  
    Care not to meet my sprite :  
Who prized me most I did not know  
    Till I passed down from sight.”

I said : “ My days are lonely here ;  
    I need thy smile alway :  
I’ll use this night my ball or blade,  
    And join thee ere the day.”

A tremor stirred her tender lips,  
Which parted to dissuade :  
“That cannot be, O friend,” she cried ;  
“Think, I am but a Shade !

“A Shade but in its mindful ones  
Has immortality ;  
By living, me you keep alive,  
By dying you slay me.

“In you resides my single power  
Of sweet continuance here ;  
On your fidelity I count  
Through many a coming year.”

—I started through me at her plight,  
So suddenly confessed :  
Dismissing late distaste for life,  
I craved its bleak unrest.

“I will not die, my One of all !—  
To lengthen out thy days  
I'll guard me from minutest harms  
That may invest my ways !”

She smiled and went. Since then she comes  
Oft when her birth-moon climbs,  
Or at the seasons' ingresses  
Or anniversary times ;

But grows my grief. When I surcease,  
Through whom alone lives she,  
Her spirit ends its living lease,  
Never again to be !



## THE IVY-WIFE

I LONGED to love a full-boughed  
beech

And be as high as he :

I stretched an arm within his reach,  
And signalled unity.

But with his drip he forced a breach,  
And tried to poison me.

I gave the grasp of partnership  
To one of other race--

A plane : he barked him strip by strip  
    From upper bough to base ;  
And me therewith ; for gone my grip,  
    My arms could not enlace.

In new affection next I strove  
    To coll an ash I saw,  
And he in trust received my love ;  
    Till with my soft green claw  
I cramped and bound him as I wove . . .  
    Such was my love : ha-ha !

By this I gained his strength and height  
    Without his rivalry.  
But in my triumph I lost sight  
    Of afterhaps.   Soon he,  
Being bark-bound, flagged, snapped, fell  
    outright,  
And in his fall felled me !

## A MEETING WITH DESPAIR

AS evening shaped I found me on a moor  
Sight shunned to entertain :  
The black lean land, of featureless contour,  
Was like a tract in pain.

“This scene, like my own life.” I said, “is  
one  
Where many glooms abide ;  
Toned by its fortune to a deadly dun—  
Lightless on every side.”

I glanced aloft and halted, pleasure-caught

To see the contrast there :

The ray-lit clouds gleamed glory ; and I  
thought,

“ There’s solace everywhere ! ”

Then bitter self-reproaches as I stood

I dealt me silently

As one perverse, misrepresenting Good

In graceless mutiny.

Against the horizon’s dim-discernèd wheel

A form rose, strange of mould :

That he was hideous, hopeless, I could feel

Rather than could behold.

“ ’Tis a dead spot, where even the light lies  
spent

To darkness ! ” croaked the Thing.

“ Not if you look aloft ! ” said I, intent

On my new reasoning.

"Yea, but await awhile!" he cried. "Ho-  
ho!—

Now look aloft and see!"

I looked. There, too, sat night: Heaven's  
radiant show

Had gone that heartened me.



## UNKNOWNING

WHEN, soul in soul reflected,  
We breathed an æthered air,  
When we neglected  
All things elsewhere,  
And left the friendly friendless  
To keep our love aglow,  
We deemed it endless . . .  
—We did not know !

When panting passion-goaded,  
We planned to hie away,

But, unforeboded,  
All the long day  
The storm so pierced and pattered  
That none could up and go,  
Our lives seemed shattered . . .  
—We did not know !

When I found you helpless lying,  
And you waived my long misprise,  
And swore me, dying,  
In phantom-guise  
To wing to me when grieving,  
And touch away my woe,  
We kissed, believing . . .  
—We did not know !

But though, your powers outreckoning,  
You tarry dead and dumb,  
Or scorn my beckoning,  
And will not come :  
And I say, " Why thus inanely  
Brood on her memory so ! "  
I say it vainly—  
I feel and know !



## FRIENDS BEYOND

**W**ILLIAM DEWY, Tranter Reuben,  
Farmer Ledlow late at plough,  
Robert's kin, and John's, and Ned's,  
And the Squire, and Lady Susan, lie in Mell-  
stock churchyard now !

"Gone," I call them, gone for good, that  
group of local hearts and heads ;  
Yet at mothy curfew-tide,  
And at midnight when the noon-heat breathes  
it back from walls and leads,

They've a way of whispering to me—  
fellow-wight who yet abide—  
In the muted, measured note  
Of a ripple under archways, or a lone  
cave's stillicide :

“We have triumphed : this achievement  
turns the bane to antidote,  
Unsuccesses to success,  
Many thought-worn eves and morrows  
to a morrow free of thought.

“No more need we corn and clothing,  
feel of old terrestrial stress ;  
Chill detraction stirs no sigh ;  
Fear of death has even bygone us : death  
gave all that we possess.”

*W. D.*—“Ye mid burn the old bass-viol that  
I set such value by.”

*Squire.*—“You may hold the manse in fee,  
You may wed my spouse, may let my  
children's memory of me die.”

*Lady S.*—"You may have my rich brocades, my  
laces ; take each household key ;  
Ransack coffer, desk, bureau ;  
Quiz the few poor treasures hid there,  
con the letters kept by me."

*Far.*—"Ye mid zell my favourite heifer, ye  
mid let the charlock grow,  
Foul the grinterns, give up thrift."

*Far. Wife.*—"If ye break my best blue china,  
children, I shan't care or ho."

*All.*—"We've no wish to hear the tidings,  
how the people's fortunes shift ;  
What your daily doings are ;  
Who are wedded, born, divided ; if your  
lives beat slow or swift.

"Curious not the least are we if our  
intentions you make or mar,  
If you quire to our old tune,  
If the City stage still passes, if the weirs  
still roar afar."

--Thus, with very gods' composure, freed  
those crosses late and soon  
Which, in life, the Trine allow  
(Why, none witteth), and ignoring all  
that haps beneath the moon,

William Dewy, Tranter Reuben, Farmer  
Ledlow late at plough,  
Robert's kin, and John's, and Ned's,  
And the Squire, and Lady Susan, mur-  
mur mildly to me now.



## TO OUTER NATURE

**S**HOW thee as I thought thee  
When I early sought thee,  
Omen-scouting,  
All undoubting  
Love alone had wrought thee—

Wrought thee for my pleasure,  
Planned thee as a measure  
For expounding  
And resounding  
Glad things that men treasure.

O for but a moment  
Of that old endowment—  
Light to gaily  
See thy daily  
Iris-hued embowment !

But such re-adorning  
Time forbids with scorning—  
Makes me see things  
Cease to be things  
They were in my morning.

Fad'st thou, glow-forsaken,  
Darkness-overtaken !  
Thy first sweetness,  
Radiance, meetness,  
None shall re-awaken.

Why not sempiternal  
Thou and I? Our vernal  
Brightness keeping,  
Time outleaping;  
Passed the hodiernal!





## THOUGHTS OF PHENA

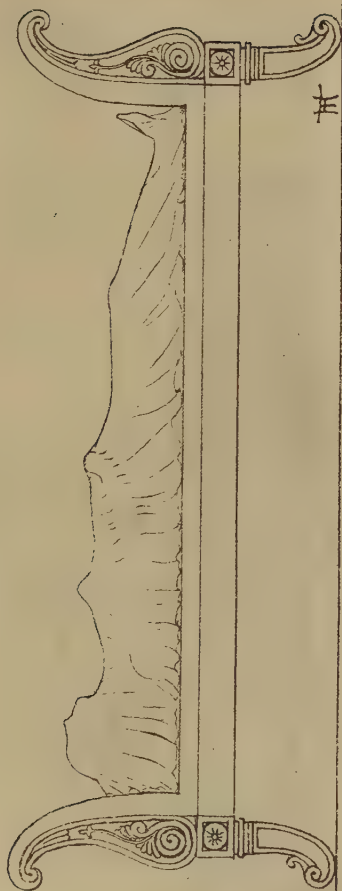
AT NEWS OF HER DEATH

NOT a line of her writing have I,  
Not a thread of her hair,  
No mark of her late time as dame in her  
dwelling, whereby  
I may picture her there ;  
And in vain do I urge my unsight  
To conceive my lost prize  
At her close, whom I knew when her dreams  
were upbrimming with light,  
And with laughter her eyes.

What scenes spread around her last days,  
Sad, shining, or dim ?  
Did her gifts and compassions enray and  
enarch her sweet ways  
With an aureate nimb ?  
Or did life-light decline from her years,  
And mischances control  
Her full day-star ; unease, or regret, or fore-  
bodings, or fears  
Disennoble her soul ?

Thus I do but the phantom retain  
Of the maiden of yore  
As my relic ; yet haply the best of her—fined  
in my brain  
It may be the more  
That no line of her writing have I,  
Nor a thread of her hair,  
No mark of her late time as dame in her  
dwelling, whereby  
I may picture her there.

*March 1890.*





## MIDDLE-AGE ENTHUSIASMS

To M. H.

WE passed where flag and flower  
Signalled a jocund throng ;  
We said : " Go to, the hour  
Is apt ! "—and joined the song ;  
And, kindling, laughed at life and care,  
Although we knew no laugh lay there.

We walked where shy birds stood  
Watching us, wonder-dumb ;

Their friendship met our mood ;  
We cried : " We'll often come :  
We'll come morn, noon, eve, everywhen !"  
—We doubted we should come again.

We joyed to see strange sheens  
Leap from quaint leaves in shade ;  
A secret light of greens  
They'd for their pleasure made.  
We said : " We'll set such sorts as these !"  
—We knew with night the wish would cease.

" So sweet the place," we said,  
" Its tacit tales so dear,  
Our thoughts, when breath has sped,  
Will meet and mingle here !" . . .  
" Words !" mused we. " Passed the mortal  
door,  
Our thoughts will reach this nook no more."

## IN A WOOD

*From "THE WOODLANDERS"*

PALE beech and pine so blue,  
Set in one clay,  
Bough to bough cannot you  
Live out your day?  
When the rains skim and skip,  
Why mar sweet comradeship,  
Blighting with poison-drip  
Neighbourly spray?

Heart-halt and spirit-lame,  
City-opprest,

Unto this wood I came  
As to a nest ;  
Dreaming that sylvan peace  
Offered the harrowed ease—  
Nature a soft release  
From men's unrest.

But, having entered in,  
Great growths and small  
Show them to men akin—  
Combatants all !  
Sycamore shoulders oak,  
Bines the slim sapling yoke,  
Ivy-spun halters choke  
Elms stout and tall.

Touches from ash, O wych,  
Sting you like scorn !  
You, too, brave hollies, twitch  
Sidelong from thorn.  
Even the rank poplars bear  
Lothly a rival's air,  
Cankering in black despair  
If overborne.



Since, then, no grace I find  
Taught me of trees,  
Turn I back to my kind,  
Worthy as these.  
There at least smiles abound,  
There discourse trills around,  
There, now and then, are found  
Life-loyalties.

1887: 1896.



## TO A LADY

OFFENDED BY A BOOK OF THE WRITER'S

NOW that my page is exiled,—doomed,  
maybe,

Never to press thy cosy cushions more,  
Or wake thy ready Yeas as heretofore,  
Or stir thy gentle vows of faith in me :

Knowing thy natural receptivity,  
I figure that, as flambeaux banish eve,  
My sombre image, warped by insidious heave  
Of those less forthright, must lose place in thee.

So be it. I have borne such. Let thy dreams  
Of me and mine diminish day by day,  
And yield their space to shine of smugger  
things ;  
Till I shape to thee but in fitful gleams,  
And then in far and feeble visitings,  
And then surcease. Truth will be truth  
alway.

## TO A MOTHERLESS CHILD

AH, child, thou art but half thy darling  
mother's ;

Hers couldst thou wholly be,  
My light in thee would outglow all in  
others ;

She would relive to me.

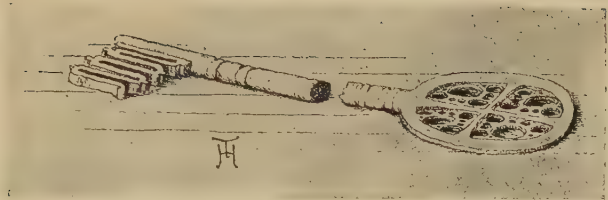
But niggard Nature's trick of birth

Bars, lest she overjoy,

Renewal of the loved on earth

Save with alloy.

The Dame has no regard, alas, my maiden,  
For love and loss like mine—  
No sympathy with mindsight memory-laden ;  
Only with fickle eyne.  
To her mechanic artistry  
My dreams are all unknown,  
And why I wish that thou couldst be  
But One's alone !



## NATURE'S QUESTIONING

WHEN I look forth at dawning,  
pool,

Field, flock, and lonely tree,

All seem to gaze at me

Like chastened children sitting silent in a  
school ;

Their faces dulled, constrained, and worn,

As though the master's ways

Through the long teaching days

Had cowed them till their early zest was  
overborne.

Upon them stirs in lippings mere  
    (As if once clear in call,  
    But now scarce breathed at all)—  
“We wonder, ever wonder, why we find us  
    here !

“Has some Vast Imbecility,  
    Mighty to build and blend,  
    But impotent to tend,  
Framed us in jest, and left us now to hazardry ?

“Or come we of an Automaton  
    Unconscious of our pains ? . . .  
    Or are we live remains  
Of Godhead dying downwards, brain and eye  
    now gone ?

“Or is it that some high Plan betides,  
    As yet not understood,  
    Of Evil stormed by Good,  
We the Forlorn Hope over which Achieve-  
    ment strides ?”



Thus things around. No answerer I . . . .

Meanwhile the winds, and rains,

And Earth's old glooms and pains

Are still the same, and Life and Death are  
neighbours nigh.



## THE IMPERCIPIENT

(AT A CATHEDRAL SERVICE)

THAT with this bright believing band  
I have no claim to be,  
That faiths by which my comrades stand  
Seem fantasies to me,  
And mirage-mists their Shining Land,  
Is a strange destiny.

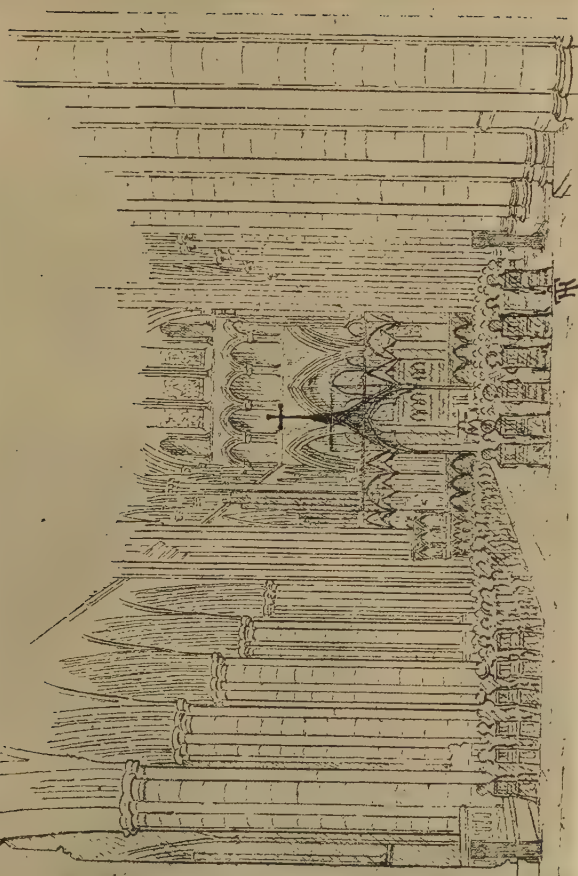
Why thus my soul should be consigned  
To infelicity,

Why always I must feel as blind  
    To sights my brethren see,  
Why joys they've found I cannot find,  
    Abides a mystery.

Since heart of mine knows not that ease  
    Which they know ; since it be  
That He who breathes All's Well to these  
    Breathes no All's-Well to me,  
My lack might move their sympathies  
    And Christian charity !

I am like a gazer who should mark  
    An inland company  
Standing upfingered, with, " Hark ! hark !  
    The glorious distant sea !"  
And feel, " Alas, 'tis but yon dark  
    And wind-swept pine to me !"

Yet I would bear my shortcomings  
    With meet tranquillity,  
But for the charge that blessed things  
    I'd liefer not have be.



III



O, doth a bird deprived of wings

Go earth-bound wilfully !

. . . . .

Enough. As yet disquiet clings

About us. Rest shall we.





## AT AN INN

WHEN we as strangers sought  
Their catering care,  
Veiled smiles bespoke their thought  
Of what we were.  
They warmed as they opined  
Us more than friends—  
That we had all resigned  
For love's dear ends.

And that swift sympathy  
With living love

Which quicks the world—maybe  
The spheres above,  
Made them our ministers,  
Moved them to say,  
“Ah, God, that bliss like theirs  
Would flush our day !”

And we were left alone  
As Love's own pair ;  
Yet never the love-light shone  
Between us there !  
But that which chilled the breath  
Of afternoon,  
And palsied unto death  
The pane-fly's tune.

The kiss their zeal foretold,  
And now deemed come,  
Came not : within his hold  
Love lingered numb.  
Why cast he on our port  
A bloom not ours ?  
Why shaped us for his sport  
In after-hours ?

As we seemed we were not  
    That day afar,  
And now we seem not what  
    We aching are.  
O severing sea and land,  
    O laws of men,  
Ere death, once let us stand  
    As we stood then !



## THE SLOW NATURE

(AN INCIDENT OF FROMM VALLEY)

“**T**HY husband—poor, poor Heart!—is  
dead—

Dead, out by Moreford Rise ;  
A bull escaped the barton-shed,  
Gored him, and there he lies !”

—“Ha, ha—go away ! ’Tis a tale, methink,  
Thou joker Kit !” laughed she.

“I’ve known thee many a year, Kit Twink,  
And ever hast thou fooled me !”

—“ But, Mistress Damon—I can swear  
Thy goodman John is dead !  
And soon th’lt hear their feet who bear  
His body to his bed.”

So unwontedly sad was the merry man’s  
face—

That face which had long deceived—  
That she gazed and gazed ; and then could  
trace  
The truth there ; and she believed.

She laid a hand on the dresser-ledge,  
And scanned far Egdon-side ;  
And stood ; and you heard the wind-swept  
sedge  
And the rippling Froom ; till she cried :

“ O my chamber’s untidied, unmade my bed,  
Though the day has begun to wear !  
‘ What a slovenly hussif ! ’ it will be said,  
When they all go up my stair ! ”

She disappeared ; and the joker stood  
Depressed by his neighbour's doom,  
And amazed that a wife struck to widowhood  
Thought first of her unkempt room.

But a fortnight thence she could take no food,  
And she pined in a slow decay ;  
While Kit soon lost his mournful mood  
And laughed in his ancient way.

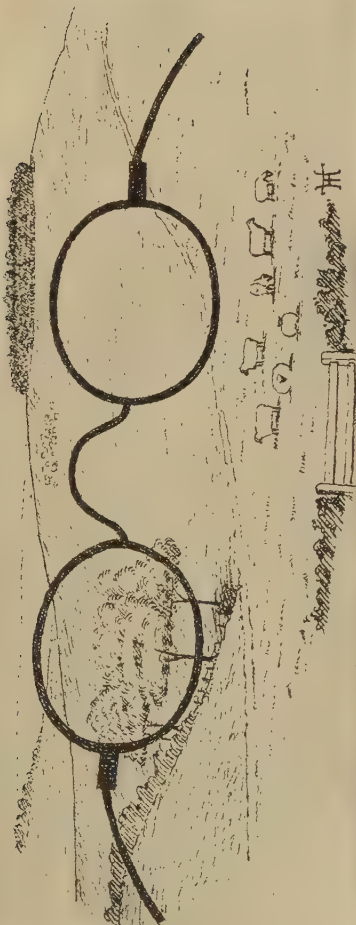
1894.

Defacing wan and grizzel  
The blazon of my prime.  
When at night he thinks me sleeping  
I feel him boring sly  
Within my bones, and heaping  
Quaintest pains for by-and-by.

Still, I'd go the world with Beauty,  
I would laugh with her and sing,  
I would shun divinest duty  
To resume her worshipping.  
But she'd scorn my brave endeavour,  
She would not balm the breeze  
By murmuring "Thine for ever!"  
As she did upon this leaze.

1890.







## ADDITIONS



## THE BRIDE-NIGHT FIRE

(A WESSEX TRADITION)

THEY had long met o' Zundays—her  
true love and she—

And at junketings, maypoles, and flings ;  
But she bode wi' a thirtover<sup>1</sup> uncle, and he  
Swore by noon and by night that her good-  
man should be

Naibour Sweatley—a wight often weak at the  
knee

From taking o' sommat more cheerful than  
tea—

Who tranted,<sup>2</sup> and moved people's things.

<sup>1</sup> *thirtover*, cross.

<sup>2</sup> *tranted*, traded as carrier.



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<sup>1</sup> *thirtover*, cross.

<sup>2</sup> *tranted*, traded as carrier.

She cried, "O pray pity me!" Nought  
would he hear ;

Then with wild rainy eyes she obeyed.  
She chid when her Love was for clinking off  
wi' her :

The pa'son was told, as the season drew near,  
To throw over pu'pit the names of the pair  
As fitting one flesh to be made.

The wedding-day dawned and the morning  
drew on ;

The couple stood bridegroom and bride ;  
The evening was passed, and when midnight  
had gone

The feasters horned,<sup>1</sup> "God save the King,"  
and anon

The pair took their homealong<sup>2</sup> ride.

The lover Tim Tankens mourned heart-sick  
and leer<sup>3</sup>

To be thus of his darling deprived :  
He roamed in the dark ath'art field, mound,  
and mere,

<sup>1</sup> *horned*, sang loudly.

<sup>2</sup> *homealong*, homeward.

<sup>3</sup> *leer*, empty-stomached.



And, a'most without knowing it, found himself  
near

The house of the tranter, and now of his Dear,  
Where the lantern-light showed 'em arrived.

The bride sought her chamber so calm and  
so pale

That a Northern had thought her resigned ;  
But to eyes that had seen her in tidetimes<sup>1</sup> of  
weal,

Like the white cloud o' smoke, the red battle-  
field's vail,

That look spak' of havoc behind.

The bridegroom yet laitered a beaker to  
drain,

Then reeled to the linhay<sup>2</sup> for more,  
When the candle-snoff kindled some chaff  
from his grain—

Flames spread, and red vlankers<sup>3</sup> wi' might  
and wi' main

Around beams, thatch, and chimley-tun<sup>4</sup> roar.

<sup>1</sup> *tidetimes*, holidays.

<sup>2</sup> *linhay*, lean-to building.

<sup>3</sup> *vlankers*, fire-flakes.

<sup>4</sup> *chimley-tun*, chimney-stack.

Young Tim away yond, rafted<sup>1</sup> up by the light,  
 Through brimble and underwood tears,  
 Till he comes to the orchet, when crooping<sup>2</sup>  
 from sight  
 In the lewth<sup>3</sup> of a codlin-tree, bivering<sup>4</sup> wi'  
 fright,  
 Wi' on'y her night-rail to cover her plight,  
 His lonesome young Barbree appears.

Her cworld little figure half-naked he views  
 Played about by the frolicsome breeze,  
 Her light-tripping totties,<sup>5</sup> her ten little tooes,  
 All bare and besprinkled wi' Fall's<sup>6</sup> chilly  
 dews,  
 While her great gallied<sup>7</sup> eyes through her hair  
 hanging loose  
 Shone as stars through a tardle<sup>8</sup> o' trees.

She eyed him ; and, as when a weir-hatch is  
 drawn,

Her tears, penned by terror afore,

<sup>1</sup> *rafted*, roused.

<sup>3</sup> *lewth*, shelter.

<sup>5</sup> *totties*, feet.

<sup>7</sup> *gallied*, frightened.

<sup>2</sup> *crooping*, squatting down.

<sup>4</sup> *bivering*, with chattering teeth.

<sup>6</sup> *fall*, autumn.

<sup>8</sup> *tardle*, entanglement.

With a rushing of sobs in a shower were  
strawn,

Till her power to pour 'em seemed wasted  
and gone

From the heft<sup>1</sup> o' misfortune she bore.

"O Tim, my *own* Tim I must call 'ee—I  
will!

All the world has turned round on me so!  
Can you help her who loved 'ee, though acting  
so ill?

Can you pity her misery—feel for her still?  
When worse than her body so quivering and  
chill

Is her heart in its winter o' woe!

"I think I mid<sup>2</sup> almost ha' borne it," she said,  
"Had my griefs one by one come to hand;  
But O, to be slave to thik husbird,<sup>3</sup> for bread,  
And then, upon top o' that, driven to wed,  
And then, upon top o' that, burnt out o' bed,  
Is more than my nater can stand!"

<sup>1</sup> *heft*, weight.

<sup>2</sup> *mid*, might.

<sup>3</sup> *thik husbird*, that rascal.

Like a lion 'ithin en Tim's spirit outsprung—  
(Tim had a great soul when his feelings were  
    wrung)—

    “Feel for 'ee, dear Barbree?” he cried ;  
And his warm working-jacket then straightway  
    he flung  
Round about her, and horsed her by jerks, till  
    she clung  
Like a chiel on a gipsy, her figure uphung  
    By the sleeves that he tightly had tied.

Over piggeries, and mixens,<sup>1</sup> and apples, and hay,  
    They lumpered<sup>2</sup> straight into the night ;  
And finding ere long where a halter-path<sup>3</sup> lay,  
Sighted Tim's house by dawn, on'y seen on  
    their way  
By a naibour or two who were up wi' the day,  
    But who gathered no clue to the sight.

Then tender Tim Tankens he searched here  
    and there

For some garment to clothe her fair skin ;

<sup>1</sup> *mixens*, manure-heaps.

<sup>2</sup> *lumpersed*, stumbled.

<sup>3</sup> *halter-path*, bridle-path.

But though he had breeches and waistcoats  
to spare,

He had nothing quite seemly for Barbree to wear,  
Who, half shrammed <sup>1</sup> to death, stood and cried  
on a chair

At the caddle <sup>2</sup> she found herself in.

There was one thing to do, and that one thing  
he did,

He lent her some clothes of his own,  
And she took 'em perforce ; and while swiftly  
she slid

Them upon her Tim turned to the winder, as bid,  
Thinking, " O that the picter my duty keeps hid  
To the sight o' my eyes mid <sup>3</sup> be shown ! "

In the tallet <sup>4</sup> he stowed her ; there huddied <sup>5</sup>  
she lay,

Shortening sleeves, legs, and tails to her  
limbs ;

But most o' the time in a mortal bad way,

<sup>1</sup> *shrammed*, numbed.

<sup>2</sup> *caddle*, quandary.

<sup>3</sup> *mid*, might.

<sup>4</sup> *tallet*, loft.

<sup>5</sup> *huddied*, hidden.

Well knowing that there'd be the divel to pay  
If 'twere found that, instead o' the element's  
prey,

She was living in lodgings at Tim's.

"Where's the tranter?" said men and boys;  
"where can he be?"

"Where's the tranter?" said Barbree alone.

"Where on e'th is the tranter?" said every-  
bod-y:

They sifted the dust of his perished roof-tree,  
And all they could find was a bone.

Then the uncle cried, "Lord, pray have  
mercy on me!"

And in terror began to repent.

But before 'twas complete, and till sure she  
was free,

Barbree drew up her loft-ladder, tight turned  
her key—

Tim bringing up breakfast and dinner and  
tea—

Till the news of her hiding got vent.

Then followed the custom-kept rout, shout,  
and flare

Of a skimmity-ride<sup>1</sup> through the naighbourhood,  
ere

Folk had proof o' wold<sup>2</sup> Sweatley's decay.  
Whereupon decent people all stood in a stare,  
Saying Tim and his lodger should risk it, and  
pair :

So he took her to church. An' some laugh-  
ing lads there

Cried to Tim, "After Sweatley!" She said,  
"I declare

I stand as a maiden to-day!"

*Written 1866; printed 1875.*

<sup>1</sup> *skimmity-ride*, satirical procession with effigies.

<sup>2</sup> *wold*, old.





## HEIRESS AND ARCHITECT

FOR A. W. BLOMFIELD

SHE sought the Studios, beckoning to her  
side

An arch-designer, for she planned to build.

He was of wise contrivance, deeply skilled

In every intervolve of high and wide—

Well fit to be her guide.

“Whatever it be,”

Responded he,

With cold, clear voice, and cold, clear view,

“In true accord with prudent fashionings  
For such vicissitudes as living brings,  
And thwarting not the law of stable things,  
That will I do.”

“Shape me,” she said, “high halls with  
tracery  
And open ogive-work, that scent and hue  
Of buds, and travelling bees, may come in  
through,  
The note of birds, and singings of the sea,  
For these are much to me.”

“An idle whim !”

Broke forth from him  
Whom nought could warm to gallantries :  
“Cede all these buds and birds, the zephyr’s  
call,  
And scents, and hues, and things that falter all,  
And choose as best the close and surly  
wall,  
For winters freeze.”





“Then frame,” she cried, “wide fronts of  
crystal glass,

That I may show my laughter and my light—  
Light like the sun’s by day, the stars’ by  
night—

Till rival heart-queens, envying, wail, ‘Alas,  
Her glory!’ as they pass.”

“O maid misled!”

He sternly said,

Whose facile foresight pierced her dire ;

“Where shall abide the soul when, sick of glee,  
It shrinks, and hides, and prays no eye may  
see ?

Those house them best who house for secrecy,  
For you will tire.”

“A little chamber, then, with swan and dove  
Ranged thickly, and engrailed with rare device  
Of reds and purples, for a Paradise  
Wherein my Love may greet me, I my Love,  
When he shall know thereof ?”

“This, too, is ill,”

He answered still,

The man who swayed her like a shade.

“An hour will come when sight of such  
sweet nook

Would bring a bitterness too sharp to brook,  
When brighter eyes have won away his look ;  
For you will fade.”

Then said she faintly : “O, contrive some  
way—

Some narrow winding turret, quite mine own,  
To reach a loft where I may grieve alone !  
It is a slight thing ; hence do not, I pray,  
This last dear fancy slay !”

“Such winding ways

Fit not your days,”

Said he, the man of measuring eye ;

“I must even fashion as the rule declares,  
To wit : Give space (since life ends unawares)  
To hale a coffined corpse adown the stairs ;  
For you will die.”

## THE TWO MEN

**T**HERE were two youths of equal age,  
Wit, station, strength, and parentage;  
They studied at the selfsame schools,  
And shaped their thoughts by common  
rules.

One pondered on the life of man,  
His hopes, his ending, and began  
To rate the Market's sordid war  
As something scarce worth living for.

"I'll brace to higher aims," said he,  
"I'll further Truth and Purity ;  
Thereby to mend the mortal lot  
And sweeten sorrow. Thrive I not,

"Winning their hearts, my kind will give  
Enough that I may lowly live,  
And house my Love in some dim dell,  
For pleasing them and theirs so well."

Idly attired, with features wan,  
In secret swift he laboured on :  
Such press of power had brought much gold  
Applied to things of meaner mould.

Sometimes he wished his aims had been  
To gather gains like other men ;  
Then thanked his God he'd traced his track  
Too far for wish to drag him back.

He looked down from his loft one day  
To where his slighted garden lay ;  
Nettles and hemlock hid each lawn,  
And every flower was starved and gone.



He fainted in his heart, whereon  
He rose, and sought his plighted one,  
Resolved to loose her bond withal,  
Lest she should perish in his fall.

He met her with a careless air,  
As though he'd ceased to find her fair,  
And said : " True love is dust to me ;  
I cannot kiss : I tire of thee ! "

(That she might scorn him was he fain,  
To put her sooner out of pain ;  
For angered love breathes quick and dies,  
When famished love long-lingering lies.)

Once done, his soul was so betossed,  
It found no more the force it lost :  
Hope was his only drink and food,  
And hope extinct, decay ensued.

And, living long so closely penned,  
He had not kept a single friend ;  
He dwindled thin as phantoms be,  
And drooped to death in poverty. . . .

Meantime his schoolmate had gone out  
To join the fortune-finding rout ;  
He liked the winnings of the mart,  
But wearied of the working part.

He turned to seek a privy lair,  
Neglecting note of garb and hair,  
And day by day reclined and thought  
How he might live by doing nought.

“I plan a valued scheme,” he said  
To some. “But lend me of your bread,  
And when the vast result looms nigh,  
In profit you shall stand as I.”

Yet they took counsel to restrain  
Their kindness till they saw the gain ;  
And, since his substance now had run,  
He rose to do what might be done.

He went unto his Love by night,  
And said : “My Love, I faint in fight :  
Deserving as thou dost a crown,  
My cares shall never drag thee down.”

(He had descried a maid whose line  
Would hand her on much corn and wine,  
And held her far in worth above  
One who could only pray and love.)

But this Fair read him ; whence he failed  
To do the deed so blithely hailed ;  
He saw his projects wholly marred,  
And gloom and want oppressed him hard ;

Till, living to so mean an end,  
Whereby he'd lost his every friend,  
He perished in the pauper sty  
Where his old mate lay dying nigh.

And moralists, reflecting, said,  
As "dust to dust " anon was read  
And echoed from each coffin-lid,  
"These men were like in all they did."



## LINES

*Spoken by Miss ADA REHAN at the Lyceum Theatre,  
July 23, 1890, at a performance on behalf of Lady  
Jeune's Holiday Fund for City Children*

BEFORE we part to alien thoughts and  
aims,

Permit the one brief word the occasion claims :

—When mumming and grave motives are  
allied,

Perhaps an Epilogue is justified.

Our under-purpose has, in truth, to-day

Commanded most our musings ; least the play :

A purpose futile but for your good-will  
Swiftly responsive to the cry of ill :  
A purpose all too limited !—to aid  
Frail human flowerets, sicklied by the  
    shade,  
In winning some short spell of upland breeze,  
Or strengthening sunlight on the level leas.

Who has not marked, where the full cheek  
    should be,  
Incipient lines of lank flaccidity,  
Lymphatic pallor where the pink should  
    glow,  
And where the throb of transport, pulses  
    low ?—

Most tragical of shapes from Pole to Line,  
O wondering child, unwitting Time's design,  
Why should Man add to Nature's quandary,  
And worsen ill by thus immuring thee ?  
—That races do despite unto their own,  
That Might supernal do indeed condone  
Wrongs individual for the general ease,  
Instance the proof in victims such as these.

Launched into thoroughfares too thronged  
before,

Mothered by those whose protest is "No  
more!"

Vitalized without option : who shall say  
That did Life hang on choosing—Yea or  
Nay—

They had not scorned it with such pen-  
alty,

And nothingness implored of Destiny ?

And yet behind the horizon smile serene  
The down, the cornland, and the stretching  
green—

Space—the child's heaven : scenes which at  
least ensure

Some palliative for ill they cannot cure.

Dear friends—now moved by this poor show  
of ours

To make your own long joy in buds and  
bowers

For one brief while the joy of infant eyes,  
Changing their urban murk to paradise—  
You have our thanks !—may your reward in-  
clude  
More than our thanks, far more : their grati-  
tude.

SAVILE CLUB, *Midnight, July 1890.*



## “I LOOK INTO MY GLASS”

I LOOK into my glass,  
And view my wasting skin,  
And say, “Would God it came to  
pass  
My heart had shrunk as thin !”

For then, I, undistrest  
By hearts grown cold to me,  
Could lonely wait my endless rest  
With equanimity.

But Time, to make me grieve,  
Part steals, lets part abide ;  
And shakes this fragile frame at eve  
With throbbings of noontide.

END OF WESSEX POEMS

POEMS OF THE PAST AND  
THE PRESENT



V.R. 1819-1901

A REVERIE

THE mightiest moments pass uncalen-  
dared,

And when the Absolute

In backward Time pronounced the deedful  
word

Whereby all life is stirred :

"Let one be born and throned whose mould  
shall constitute

The norm of every royal-reckoned attribute,"

No mortal knew or heard.

But in due days the purposed Life out-  
shone—

Serene, sagacious, free ;

—Her waxing seasons bloomed with deeds  
well done,

And the world's heart was won . . .

Yet may the deed of hers most bright in eyes  
to be

Lie hid from ours—as in the All-One's thought  
lay she—

Till ripening years have run.

SUNDAY NIGHT,

*27th January 1901.*

# WAR POEMS





## EMBARCATION

*(Southampton Docks: October, 1899)*

HERE, where Vespasian's legions struck  
the sands,

And Cerdic with his Saxons entered in,

And Henry's army leapt afloat to win

Convincing triumphs over neighbour lands,

Vaster battalions press for further strands,

To argue in the selfsame bloody mode

Which this late age of thought, and pact, and  
code,

Still fails to mend.—Now deckward tramp the  
bands,

Yellow as autumn leaves, alive as spring ;  
And as each host draws out upon the sea  
Beyond which lies the tragical To-be,  
None dubious of the cause, none murmuring,

Wives, sisters, parents, wave white hands and  
smile,  
As if they knew not that they weep the while.

## DEPARTURE

(*Southampton Docks: October, 1899*)

WHILE the far farewell music thins and  
fails,

And the broad bottoms rip the bearing  
brine—

All smalling slowly to the gray sea line—

And each significant red smoke-shaft pales,

Keen sense of severance everywhere prevails,  
Which shapes the late long tramp of mounting  
men

To seeming words that ask and ask again :

“How long, O ruling Teutons, Slavs, and  
Gael

Must your wroth reasonings trade on lives like  
these,

That are as puppets in a playing hand?—

When shall the saner softer polities

Whereof we dream, have sway in each proud  
land,

And patriotism, grown Godlike, scorn to  
stand

Bondslave to realms, but circle earth and  
seas ?”

## THE COLONEL'S SOLILOQUY

*(Southampton Docks : October, 1899)*

“THE quay recedes. Hurrah ! Ahead we  
go ! . . .

It's true I've been accustomed now to home,  
And joints get rusty, and one's limbs may  
grow

More fit to rest than roam.

“ But I can stand as yet fair stress and strain ;  
There's not a little steel beneath the rust ;  
My years mount somewhat, but here's to't  
again !

And if I fall, I must.

“God knows that for myself I have scanty care ;  
Past scrimmages have proved as much to all ;  
In Eastern lands and South I have had my  
share

Both of the blade and ball.

“And where those villains ripped me in the  
flitch

With their old iron in my early time,  
I'm apt at change of wind to feel a twitch,  
Or at a change of clime.

“And what my mirror shows me in the  
morning

Has more of blotch and wrinkle than of  
bloom ;

My eyes, too, heretofore all glasses scorning,  
Have just a touch of rheum. . . .

“Now sounds ‘The Girl I've left behind me.’  
—Ah,

The years, the ardours, wakened by that tune !  
Time was when, with the crowd's farewell  
‘Hurrah !’

’Twould lift me to the moon.

“ But now it's late to leave behind me one  
Who if, poor soul, her man goes underground,  
Will not recover as she might have done  
In days when hopes abound.

“ She's waving from the wharfside, palely  
grieving,  
As down we draw. . . . Her tears make little  
show,  
Yet now she suffers more than at my leaving  
Some twenty years ago !

“ I pray those left at home will care for her ;  
I shall come back ; I have before ; though  
when  
The Girl you leave behind you is a grand-  
mother,  
Things may not be as then.”

THE GOING OF THE BATTERY  
WIVES' LAMENT

*(November 2, 1899)*

I

O IT was sad enough, weak enough,  
mad enough—

Light in their loving as soldiers can be—

First to risk choosing them, leave alone losing  
them

Now, in far battle, beyond the South Sea ! . . .



## II

—Rain came down drenchingly ; but we un-  
blenchingly  
Trudged on beside them through mirk and  
through mire,  
They stepping steadily—only too readily !—  
Scarce as if stepping brought parting-time  
nigher.

## III

Great guns were gleaming there, living things  
seeming there,  
Cloaked in their tar-cloths, upmouthed to the  
night ;  
Wheels wet and yellow from axle to felloe,  
Throats blank of sound, but prophetic to sight.

## IV

Gas-glimmers drearily, blearily, eerily  
Lit our pale faces outstretched for one kiss,  
While we stood prest to them, with a last  
quest to them  
Not to court perils that honour could miss.

## V

Sharp were those sighs of ours, blinded these  
 eyes of ours,  
 When at last moved away under the arch  
 All we loved. Aid for them each woman  
 prayed for them,  
 Treading back slowly the track of their march.

## VI

Someone said : "Nevermore will they come ;  
 evermore  
 Are they now lost to us." O it was wrong !  
 Though may be hard their ways, some Hand  
 will guard their ways,  
 Bear them through safely, in brief time or long.

## VII

—Yet, voices haunting us, daunting us, taunt-  
 ing us,  
 Hint in the night-time when life beats are low  
 Other and graver things . . . Hold we to  
 braver things,  
 Wait we, in trust, what Time's fulness shall  
 show.

## AT THE WAR OFFICE, LONDON

(*Affixing the Lists of Killed and Wounded :*  
*December, 1899*)

### I

LAST year I called this world of gain-  
givings  
The darkest thinkable, and questioned  
sadly  
If my own land could heave its pulse less  
gladly,  
So charged it seemed with circumstance  
that brings  
The tragedy of things.

## II

Yet at that censured time no heart was rent  
Or feature blanched of parent, wife, or  
daughter

By hourly posted sheets of scheduled slaughter ;  
Death waited Nature's wont ; Peace smiled  
unshent

From Ind to Occident.

## A CHRISTMAS GHOST-STORY

SOUTH of the Line, inland from far  
Durban,

A mouldering soldier lies—your countryman.  
Awry and doubled up are his gray bones,  
And on the breeze his puzzled phantom  
moans

Nightly to clear Canopus : “I would know  
By whom and when the All-Earth-gladdening  
Law

Of Peace, brought in by that Man Crucified,  
Was ruled to be inept, and set aside ?

And what of logic or of truth appears  
In tacking 'Anno Domini' to the years?  
Near twenty-hundred liveried thus have hied,  
But tarries yet the Cause for which He died.'

*Christmas-eve, 1899.*

## DRUMMER HODGE

i

THEY throw in Drummer Hodge, to  
rest

Uncoffined—just as found :  
His landmark is a kopje-crest  
That breaks the veldt around ;  
And foreign constellations west  
Each night above his mound.

## II

Young Hodge the Drummer never knew—  
Fresh from his Wessex home—  
The meaning of the broad Karoo,  
The Bush, the dusty loam,  
And why uprose to nightly view  
Strange stars amid the gloam.

## III

Yet portion of that unknown plain  
Will Hodge for ever be ;  
His homely Northern breast and brain  
Grow to some Southern tree,  
And strange-eyed constellations reign  
His stars eternally.



## A WIFE IN LONDON

(*December, 1899*)

### I

SHE sits in the tawny vapour  
That the Thames-side lanes have  
uprolled,  
Behind whose webby fold on fold  
Like a waning taper  
The street-lamp glimmers cold.  
A messenger's knock cracks smartly,  
Flashed news is in her hand  
Of meaning it dazes to understand

Though shaped so shortly :

*He—has fallen—in the far South  
Land. . . .*

## II

'Tis the morrow ; the fog hangs thicker,

The postman nears and goes :

A letter is brought whose lines dis-  
close

By the firelight flicker

His hand, whom the worm now knows:

Fresh—firm—penned in highest feather—

Page-full of his hoped return,

And of home-planned jaunts by brake  
and burn

In the summer weather,

And of new love that they would learn.

## THE SOULS OF THE SLAIN

### I

THE thick lids of Night closed upon me  
Alone at the Bill  
Of the Isle by the Race \*—

Many-caverned, bald, wrinkled of face—  
And with darkness and silence the spirit was  
on me  
To brood and be still.

\* The "Race" is the turbulent sea-area off the Bill of Portland, where contrary tides meet.

## II

No wind fanned the flats of the ocean,  
Or promontory sides,  
Or the ooze by the strand,  
Or the bent-bearded slope of the land,  
Whose base took its rest amid everlong motion  
Of criss-crossing tides.

## III

Soon from out of the Southward seemed  
nearing  
A whirr, as of wings  
Waved by mighty-vanned flies,  
Or by night-moths of measureless size,  
And in softness and smoothness well-nigh  
beyond hearing  
Of corporal things.

## IV

And they bore to the bluff, and alighted—  
A dim-discerned train  
Of sprites without mould,  
Frameless souls none might touch or  
might hold—

On the ledge by the turreted lantern, far-  
sighted  
By men of the main.

## V

And I heard them say "Home!" and I  
knew them  
For souls of the felled  
On the earth's nether bord  
Under Capricorn, whither they'd warred,  
And I neared in my awe, and gave heedfulness  
to them  
With breathings inheld.

## VI

Then, it seemed, there approached from  
the northward  
A senior soul-flame  
Of the like filmy hue :  
And he met them and spake : "Is it you,  
O my men?" Said they, "Aye! We bear  
homeward and hearthward  
To feast on our fame!"

## VII

"I've flown there before you," he said  
then :

"Your households are well ;

But—your kin linger less

On your glory and war-mightiness

Than on dearer things."—"Dearer ?" cried  
these from the dead then,

"Of what do they tell ?"

## VIII

"Some mothers muse sadly, and murmur

Your doings as boys—

Recall the quaint ways •

Of your babyhood's innocent days.

Some pray that, ere dying, your faith had  
grown firmer,

And higher your joys.

## IX

"A father broods : ' Would I had set him

To some humble trade,

And so slacked his high fire,

And his passionate martial desire ;

Had told him no stories to woo him and whet  
him

To this dire crusade !' ”

X

“ And, General, how hold out our sweet-  
hearts,

Sworn loyal as doves ? ”

—“ Many mourn ; many think

It is not unattractive to prink

Them in sables for heroes. Some fickle and  
fleet hearts

Have found them new loves.”

XI

“ And our wives ? ” quoth another re-  
signedly,

“ Dwell they on our deeds ? ”

—“ Deeds of home ; that live yet

Fresh as new—deeds of fondness or fret ;

Ancient words that were kindly expressed or  
unkindly,

These, these have their heeds.”

## XII

—“ Alas ! then it seems that our glory  
Weighs less in their thought  
Than our old homely acts,  
And the long-ago commonplace facts  
Of our lives—held by us as scarce part of our  
story,  
And rated as nought ! ”

## XIII

Then bitterly some : “ Was it wise now  
To raise the tomb-door  
For such knowledge ? Away ! ”  
But the rest : “ Fame we prized till to-day ;  
Yet that hearts keep us green for old kindness  
we prize now  
A thousand times more ! ”

## XIV

Thus speaking, the trooped apparitions  
Began to disband  
And resolve them in two :  
Those whose record was lovely and true



Bore to northward for home : those of bitter  
traditions  
Again left the land,

## XV

And, towering to seaward in legions,  
They paused at a spot  
Overbending the Race—  
That engulfing, ghast, sinister place—  
Whither headlong they plunged, to the fathom-  
less regions  
Of myriads forgot.

## XVI

And the spirits of those who were homing  
Passed on, rushingly,  
Like the Pentecost Wind ;  
And the whirr of their wayfaring thinned  
And surceased on the sky, and but left in the  
gloaming  
Sea-mutterings and me.

*December, 1899.*

SONG OF THE SOLDIERS' WIVES  
AND SWEETHEARTS

i

**A**T last ! In sight of home again,  
Of home again ;  
No more to range and roam again  
As at that bygone time ?  
No more to go away from us  
And stay from us ?—  
Dawn, hold not long the day from us,  
But quicken it to prime !

## II

Now all the town shall ring to them,  
     Shall ring to them,  
 And we who love them cling to them  
     And clasp them joyfully ;  
 And cry, " O much we'll do for you  
     Anew for you,  
 Dear Loves !—aye, draw and hew for you,  
     Come back from oversea."

## III

Some told us we should meet no more,  
     Yea, meet no more !—  
 Should wait, and wish, but greet no more  
     Your faces round our fires ;  
 That, in a while, uncharily  
     And drearily  
 Men gave their lives—even wearily,  
     Like those whom living tires.

## IV

And now you are nearing home again,  
Dears, home again ;  
No more, may be, to roam again  
As at that bygone time,  
Which took you far away from us  
To stay from us ;  
Dawn, hold not long the day from us,  
But quicken it to prime !

## THE SICK BATTLE-GOD

### I

**I**N days when men found joy in war,  
A God of Battles sped each mortal  
jar ;

The peoples pledged him heart and hand,  
From Israel's land to isles afar.

### II

His crimson form, with clang and chime,  
Flashed on each murk and murderous meet-  
ing-time,

And kings invoked, for rape and raid,  
His fearsome aid in rune and rhyme.

## III

On bruise and blood-hole, scar and  
seam,  
On blade and bolt, he flung his fulgid beam ;  
His haloes rayed the very gore,  
And corpses wore his glory-gleam.

## IV

Often an early King or Queen,  
And storied hero onward, caught his sheen ;  
'Twas glimpsed by Wolfe, by Ney anon,  
And Nelson on his blue demesne:

## V

But new light spread. That god's gold  
nimb  
And blazon have waned dimmer and more  
dim ;  
Even his flushed form begins to fade,  
Till but a shade is left of him.

## VI

That modern meditation broke  
His spell, that penmen's pleadings dealt a  
stroke,  
Say some ; and some that crimes too dire  
Did much to mire his crimson cloak.

## VII

Yea, seeds of crescent sympathy  
Were sown by those more excellent than he,  
Long known, though long condemned till  
then—  
The gods of men in amity.

## VIII

Souls have grown seers, and thought out-  
brings  
The mournful many-sidedness of things  
With foes as friends, enfeebling ires  
And fury-fires by gaingivings !

## IX

He rarely gladdens champions now ;  
They do and dare, but tensely—pale of brow,

And would they fain uplift the arm  
Of that weak form they know not how.

## X

Yet wars arise, though zest grows cold ;  
Wherefore, at times, as if in ancient mould  
He looms, bepatched with paint and lath ;  
But never hath he seemed the old !

## XI

Let men rejoice, let men deplore,  
The lurid Deity of heretofore  
Succumbs to one of saner nod ;  
The Battle-god is god no more.



POEMS OF PILGRIMAGE



GENOA AND THE MEDI-  
TERRANEAN

(*March, 1887*)

O EPIC-FAMED, god-haunted Central  
Sea,  
Heave careless of the deep wrong done  
to thee  
When from Torino's track I saw thy face first  
flash on me.

And multimarbled Genova the Proud,  
 Gleam all unconscious how, wide-lipped,  
 up-browed,  
 I first beheld thee clad—not as the Beauty but  
 the Dowd.

Out from a deep-delved way my vision  
 lit  
 On housebacks pink, green, ochreous—  
 where a slit  
 Shoreward 'twixt row and row revealed the  
 classic blue through it.

And thereacross waved fishwives' high-  
 hung smocks,  
 Chrome kerchiefs, scarlet hose, darned  
 underfrocks ;  
 Often since when my dreams of thee, O Queen,  
 that frippery mocks :

Whereat I grieve, Superba ! . . . Afterhours  
 Within Palazzo Doria's orange bowers  
 Went far to mend these marrings of thy soul-  
 subliming powers.

But, Queen, such squalid undress none  
should see,

Those dream-endangering eyewounds no  
more be

Where lovers first behold thy form in pilgrim-  
age to thee.

## SHELLEY'S SKYLARK

*(The neighbourhood of Leghorn : March, 1887)*

SOMEWHERE afield here something lies  
In Earth's oblivious eyeless trust  
That moved a poet to prophecies—  
A pinch of unseen, unguarded dust :

The dust of the lark that Shelley heard,  
And made immortal through times to be ;—  
Though it only lived like another bird,  
And knew not its immortality :

Lived its meek life ; then, one day, fell—  
A little ball of feather and bone ;  
And how it perished, when piped farewell,  
And where it wastes, are alike unknown.

Maybe it rests in the loam I view,  
Maybe it throbs in a myrtle's green,  
Maybe it sleeps in the coming hue  
Of a grape on the slopes of yon inland scene.

Go find it, faeries, go and find  
That tiny pinch of priceless dust,  
And bring a casket silver-lined,  
And framed of gold that gems encrust ;

And we will lay it safe therein,  
And consecrate it to endless time ;  
For it inspired a bard to win  
Ecstatic heights in thought and rhyme.

## IN THE OLD THEATRE, FIESOLE

*(April, 1887)*

I TRACED the Circus whose gray stones  
incline

Where Rome and dim Etruria interjoin,  
Till came a child who showed an ancient coin  
That bore the image of a Constantine.

She lightly passed ; nor did she once opine  
How, better than all books, she had raised  
for me



In swift perspective Europe's history  
Through the vast years of Cæsar's sceptred  
line.

For in my distant plot of English loam  
'Twas but to delve, and straightway there to  
find  
Coins of like impress. As with one half blind  
Whom common simples cure, her act flashed  
home  
In that mute moment to my opened mind  
The power, the pride, the reach of perished  
Rome.

## ROME : ON THE PALATINE

(*April, 1887*)

WE walked where Victor Jove was  
shrined awhile,  
And passed to Livia's rich red mural show,  
Whence, thridding cave and Criptoportico,  
We gained Caligula's dissolving pile.

And each ranked ruin tended to beguile  
The outer sense, and shape itself as though

It wore its marble gleams, its pristine glow  
Of scenic frieze and pompous peristyle.

When lo, swift hands, on strings nigh over-  
head,

Began to melodize a waltz by Strauss :

It stirred me as I stood, in Cæsar's house,  
Raised the old routs Imperial lyres had led,

And blended pulsing life with lives long done,  
Till Time seemed fiction, Past and Present  
one.

## ROME

### BUILDING A NEW STREET IN THE ANCIENT QUARTER

( *April*, 1887)

THESE umbered cliffs and gnarls of  
masonry

Outskeleton Time's central city, Rome ;  
Whereof each arch, entablature, and dome  
Lies bare in all its gaunt anatomy.

And cracking frieze and rotten metope  
Express, as though they were an open tome

Top-lined with caustic monitory gnome ;  
“Dunces, Learn here to spell Humanity !”

And yet within these ruins' very shade  
The singing workmen shape and set and join  
Their frail new mansion's stuccoed cove and  
    quoin

With no apparent sense that years abrade,  
Though each rent wall their feeble works  
    invade

Once shamed all such in power of pier and  
    groin.

## ROME

THE VATICAN—SALA DELLE MUSE

(1887)

I SAT in the Muses' Hall at the mid of the  
day,  
And it seemed to grow still, and the people to  
pass away,  
And the chiselled shapes to combine in a haze  
of sun,  
Till beside a Carrara column there gleamed  
forth One.

She looked not this nor that of those beings  
divine,  
But each and the whole—an essence of all the  
Nine ;  
With tentative foot she neared to my halting-  
place,  
A pensive smile on her sweet. small, marvellous  
face.

“ Regarded so long, we render thee sad ? ” said  
she.

“ Not you,” sighed I, “ but my own incon-  
stancy !

I worship each and each ; in the morning one,  
And then, alas ! another at sink of sun.

“ To-day my soul clasps Form ; but where is  
my troth

Of yesternight with Tune : can one cleave to  
both ? ”

—“ Be not perturbed,” said she. “ Though  
apart in fame,

As I and my sisters are one, those, too, are the  
same.”

—"But my love goes further—to Story, and  
Dance, and Hymn,

The lover of all in a sun-sweep is fool to  
whim—

Is swayed like a river-weed as the ripples  
run !"

—"Nay, wooer, thou sway'st not. These are  
but phases of one ;

"And that one is I ; and I am projected from  
thee,

One that out of thy brain and heart thou  
causest to be—

Extern to thee nothing. Grieve not, nor thy-  
self becall,

Woo where thou wilt ; and rejoice thou canst  
love at all !"



## ROME

AT THE PYRAMID OF CESTIUS  
NEAR THE GRAVES OF SHELLEY AND KEATS

(1887)

WHO, then, was Cestius,  
And what is he to me?—  
Amid thick thoughts and memories multitudi-  
nous  
One thought alone brings he.

I can recall no word  
Of anything he did ;  
For me he is a man who died and was in-  
terred  
To leave a pyramid

Whose purpose was exprest  
Not with its first design,  
Nor till, far down in Time, beside it found their  
rest  
Two countrymen of mine.

Cestius in life, maybe,  
Slew, breathed out threatening ;  
I know not. This I know : in death all  
silently  
He does a finer thing,

In beckoning pilgrim feet  
With marble finger high  
To where, by shadowy wall and history-haunted  
street,  
Those matchless singers lie. . . .

—Say, then, he lived and died  
That stones which bear his name  
Should mark, through Time, where two im-  
mortal Shades abide;  
It is an ample fame.

## LAUSANNE

IN GIBBON'S OLD GARDEN : 11-12 P.M.

*June 27, 1897*

*(The 110th anniversary of the completion of the "Decline and Fall" at the same hour and place)*

A SPIRIT seems to pass,  
Formal in pose, but grave withal and  
grand :

He contemplates a volume in his hand,  
And far lamps flick him through the thin  
acacias.

Anon the book is closed,  
With "It is finished!" And at the alley's  
end

He turns, and when on me his glances  
bend

As from the Past comes speech—small, muted,  
yet composed.

"How fares the Truth now?—Ill?  
—Do pens but sily further her advance?  
May one not speed her but in phrase  
askance?

Do scribes aver the Comic to be Reverend  
still?

"Still rule those minds on earth  
At whom sage Milton's wormwood words  
were hurled:

*'Truth like a bastard comes into the world  
Never without ill-fame to him who gives her  
birth'?*"

## ZERMATT

TO THE MATTERHORN

(*June-July, 1897*)

**T**HIRTY-TWO years since, up against  
the sun,  
Seven shapes, thin atomies to lower sight,  
Labouringly leapt and gained thy gabled  
height,  
And four lives paid for what the seven had  
won.

They were the first by whom the deed was  
done,

And when I look at thee, my mind takes  
flight

To that day's tragic feat of manly might,

As though, till then, of history thou hadst  
none.

Yet ages ere men topped thee, late and  
soon

Thou didst behold the planets lift and lower ;  
Saw'st, maybe, Joshua's pausing sun and  
moon,

And the betokening sky when Cæsar's power  
Approached its bloody end : yea, even that  
Noon

When darkness filled the earth till the ninth  
hour.

## THE BRIDGE OF LODI \*

(*Spring, 1887*)

### I

WHEN of tender mind and body,  
I was moved by minstrelsy,  
And that air "The Bridge of Lodi"  
Brought a strange delight to me.

\* Pronounce "Loddy."



## II

In the battle-breathing jingle  
Of its forward-footing tune  
I could see the armies mingle,  
And the columns crushed and hewn

## III

On that far-famed spot by Lodi  
Where Napoleon clove his way  
To his fame, when like a god he  
Bent the nations to his sway.

## IV

Hence the tune came capering to me  
While I traced the Rhone and Po ;  
Nor could Milan's Marvel woo me  
From the spot englamoured so.

## V

And to-day, sunlit and smiling,  
Here I stand upon the scene,  
With its saffron walls, dun tiling,  
And its meads of maiden green,

## VI

Even as when the trackway thundered  
    With the charge of grenadiers,  
And the blood of forty hundred  
    Splashed its parapets and piers. . . .

## VII

Any ancient crone I'd toady  
    Like a lass in young-eyed prime,  
Could she tell some tale of Lodi  
    At that moving mighty time.

## VIII

So, I ask the wives of Lodi  
    For traditions of that day ;  
But alas ! not anybody  
    Seems to know of such a fray.

## IX

And they heed but transitory  
    Marketings in cheese and meat,  
Till I judge that Lodi's story  
    Is extinct in Lodi's street.

## X

Yet while here and there they thrid them  
In their zest to sell and buy,  
Let me sit me down amid them  
And behold those thousands die. . . .

## XI

—Not a creature cares in Lodi  
How Napoleon swept each arch,  
Or where up and downward trod he,  
Or for his outmatching march.

## XII

So that wherefore should I be here,  
Watching Adda lip the lea,  
When the whole romance to see here  
Is the dream I bring with me ?

## XIII

And why sing "The Bridge of Lodi"  
As I sit thereon and swing,  
When none shows by smile or nod he  
Guesses why or what I sing ? . . .

## XIV

Since all Lodi, low and head ones,  
Seem to pass that story by,  
It may be the Lodi-bred ones  
Rate it truly, and not I.

## XV

Once engrossing Bridge of Lodi,  
Is thy claim to glory gone ?  
Must I pipe a palinody,  
Or be silent thereupon ?

## XVI

And if here, from strand to steeple,  
Be no stone to fame the fight,  
Must I say the Lodi people  
Are but viewing war aright ? . . .

## XVII

Nay ; I'll sing "The Bridge of Lodi"—  
That long-loved, romantic thing,  
Though none show by smile or nod he  
Guesses why and what I sing !

## ON AN INVITATION TO THE UNITED STATES

### I

**M**Y ardours for emprise nigh lost  
Since Life has bared its bones  
to me,

I shrink to seek a modern coast  
Whose riper times have yet to be ;  
Where the new regions claim them free  
From that long drip of human tears  
Which peoples old in tragedy  
Have left upon the centuried years.

## II

For, winning in these ancient lands,  
Enchased and lettered as a tomb,  
And scored with prints of perished  
    hands,  
And chronicled with dates of doom,  
Though my own Being bear no  
    bloom  
I trace the lives such scenes enshrine,  
Give past exemplars present room,  
And their experience count as mine.

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS





## THE MOTHER MOURNS

WHEN mid-autumn's moan shook the  
night-time,

And sedges were horny,

And summer's green wonderwork faltered

On leaze and in lane,

I fared Yell'ham-Firs way, where dimly

Came wheeling around me

Those phantoms obscure and insistent

That shadows unchain.

Till airs from the needle-thicks brought me  
A low lamentation,  
As though from a tree-god disheartened,  
Perplexed, or in pain.

And, heeding, it awed me to gather  
That Nature herself there  
Was breathing in æry accents,  
With dirgelike refrain,

Weary plaint that Mankind, in these late days,  
Had grieved her by holding  
Her ancient high fame of perfection  
In doubt and disdain. . . .

—"I had not proposed me a Creature  
(She soughed) so excelling  
All else of my kingdom in compass  
And brightness of brain

"As to read my defects with a god-glance,  
Uncover each vestige  
Of old inadvertence, annunciate  
Each flaw and each stain !

“ My purpose went not to develop  
Such insight in Earthland ;  
Such potent appraisements affront me,  
And sadden my reign !

“ Why loosened I olden control here  
To mechanize skywards,  
Undeeming great scope could outshape in  
A globe of such grain ?

“ Man's mountings of mind-sight I checked not,  
Till range of his vision  
Has topped my intent, and finds blemish  
Throughout my domain.

“ He holds as inept his own soul-shell—  
My deftest achievement—  
Contemns me for fitful inventions  
Ill-timed and inane :

“ No more sees my sun as a Sanct-shape,  
My moon as the Night-queen,  
My stars as august and sublime ones  
That influences rain :

“Reckons gross and ignoble my teaching,  
Immoral my story,  
My love-lights a lure that my species  
May gather and gain.

“‘Give me,’ he has said, ‘but the matter  
And means the gods lot her,  
My brain could evolve a creation  
More seemly, more sane.’

—“If ever a naughtiness seized me  
To woo adulation  
From creatures more keen than those crude  
ones  
That first formed my train—

“If inly a moment I murmured,  
‘The simple praise sweetly,  
But sweetlier the sage’—and did rashly  
Man’s vision unrein,

“I rue it! . . . His guileless forerunners,  
Whose brains I could blandish,

To measure the deeps of my mysteries  
Applied them in vain.

“ From them my waste aimings and futile  
I subtly could cover ;  
‘ Every best thing,’ said they, ‘ to best purpose  
Her powers preordain.’—

“ No more such ! . . . My species are dwindling,  
My forests grow barren,  
My popinjays fail from their tappings,  
My larks from their strain.

“ My leopardine beauties are rarer,  
My tusky ones vanish,  
My children have aped mine own slaughters  
To quicken my wane.

“ Let me grow, then, but mildews and mand-  
rakes,  
And slimy distortions,  
Let nevermore things good and lovely  
To me appertain ;

“ For Reason is rank in my temples,  
And Vision unruly,  
And chivalrous laud of my cunning  
Is heard not again ! ”

## “I SAID TO LOVE”

I SAID to Love,  
“It is not now as in old days  
When men adored thee and thy ways  
All else above ;  
Named thee the Boy, the Bright, the One  
Who spread a heaven beneath the sun,”  
I said to Love.

I said to him,  
"We now know more of thee than then ;  
We were but weak in judgment when,  
With hearts abrim,  
We clamoured thee that thou would'st please  
Inflict on us thine agonies,"  
I said to him.

I said to Love,  
"Thou art not young, thou art not fair,  
No elfin darts, no cherub air,  
Nor swan, nor dove  
Are thine ; but features pitiless,  
And iron daggers of distress,"  
I said to Love.

"Depart then, Love ! . . .  
—Man's race shall perish, threatenest thou,  
Without thy kindling coupling-vow ?  
The age to come the man of now  
Know nothing of?—  
We fear not such a threat from thee ;  
We are too old in apathy !  
*Mankind shall cease.*—So let it be,"  
I said to Love.



## A COMMONPLACE DAY

THE day is turning ghost,  
And scuttles from the kal-  
endar in fits and furtively,  
To join the anonymous host  
Of those that throng oblivion ; ceding his  
place, maybe,  
To one of like degree.

I part the fire-gnawed logs,  
Rake forth the embers, spoil the busy flames,  
and lay the ends

Upon the shining dogs ;  
Further and further from the nooks the twilight's stride extends,  
And beamless black impends.

Nothing of tiniest worth  
Have I wrought, pondered, planned ; no one  
thing asking blame or praise,  
Since the pale corpse-like birth  
Of this diurnal unit, bearing blanks in all its  
rays,—

Dullest of dull-hued Days !

Wanly upon the panes  
The rain slides, as have slid since morn my  
colourless thoughts ; and yet  
Here, while Day's presence wanes,  
And over him the sepulchre-lid is slowly  
lowered and set,  
He wakens my regret.

Regret—though nothing dear  
That-I wot of, was toward in the wide world  
at his prime,  
Or bloomed elsewhere than here,  
To die with his decease, and leave a memory  
sweet, sublime,  
Or mark him out in Time. . . .

—Yet, maybe, in some soul,  
In some spot undiscerned on sea or land, some  
impulse rose,  
Or some intent upstole  
Of that enkindling ardency from whose  
maturer glows  
The world's amendment flows ;

But which, benumbed at birth  
By momentary chance or wile, has missed its  
hope to be  
Embodied on the earth ;  
And undervoicings of this loss to man's  
futurity  
May wake regret in me.

## AT A LUNAR ECLIPSE

THY shadow, Earth, from Pole to Cen-  
tral Sea,  
Now steals along upon the Moon's meek  
shine  
In even monochrome and curving line  
Of imperturbable serenity.

How shall I link such sun-cast symmetry  
With the torn troubled form I know as thine,

That profile, placid as a brow divine,  
With continents of moil and misery ?

And can immense Mortality but throw  
So small a shade, and Heaven's high human  
scheme

Be hemmed within the coasts yon arc implies ?

Is such the stellar gauge of earthly show,  
Nation at war with nation, brains that teem,  
Heroes, and women fairer than the skies ?

## THE LACKING SENSE

SCENE.—*A sad-coloured landscape, Waddon Vale*

### I

“O TIME, whence comes the Mother's  
moody look amid her labours,  
As of one who all unwittingly has wounded  
where she loves ?

Why weaves she not her world-webs to  
according lutes and tabors,  
With nevermore this too remorseful air upon  
her face,  
As of angel fallen from grace ?”

## II

—“Her look is but her story : construe not  
its symbols keenly :

In her wonderworks yea surely has she  
wounded where she loves.

The sense of ills misdealt for blisses blanks  
the mien most queenly,

Self-smitings kill self-joys ; and everywhere  
beneath the sun

Such deeds her hands have done.”

## III

—“And how explains thy Ancient Mind her  
crimes upon her creatures,

These fallings from her fair beginnings,  
woundings where she loves,

Into her would-be perfect motions, modes,  
effects, and features

Admitting cramps, black humours, wan  
decay, and baleful blights,

Distress into delights ? ”

## IV

—“Ah ! knowest thou not her secret yet, her  
vainly veiled deficiency,  
Whence it comes that all unwittingly she  
wounds the lives she loves ?  
That sightless are those orbs of hers ?—which  
bar to her omniscience  
Brings those fearful unfulfilments, that reel  
ravage through her zones  
Whereat all creation groans.

## V

“She whispers it in each pathetic strenuous  
slow endeavour,  
When in mothering she unwittingly sets  
wounds on what she loves ;  
Yet her primal doom pursues her, faultful, fatal  
is she ever ;  
Though so deft and nigh to vision is her  
facile finger-touch  
That the seers marvel much.



## VI

“Deal, then, her groping skill no scorn, no  
note of malediction ;

Not long on thee will press the hand that  
hurts the lives it loves ;

And while she plods dead-reckoning on, in  
darkness of affliction,

Assist her where thy creaturely dependence  
can or may,

For thou art of her clay.”

## TO LIFE

**O** LIFE with the sad seared face,  
I weary of seeing thee,  
And thy draggled cloak, and thy hobbling pace,  
And thy too-forced pleasantry !

I know what thou would'st tell  
Of Death, Time, Destiny—  
I have known it long, and know, too, well  
What it all means for me.

But canst thou not array  
Thyself in rare disguise,  
And feign like truth, for one mad day,  
That Earth is Paradise ?

I'll tune me to the mood,  
And mumm with thee till eve ;  
And maybe what as interlude  
I feign, I shall believe !

## DOOM AND SHE

### I

**T**HERE dwells a mighty pair—  
Slow, statuesque, intense—  
Amid the vague Immense :  
None can their chronicle declare,  
Nor why they be, nor whence.

## II

Mother of all things made,  
Matchless in artistry,  
Unlit with sight is she.—  
And though her ever well-obeyed  
Vacant of feeling he.

## III

The Matron mildly asks—  
A throb in every word—  
“Our clay-made creatures, lord,  
How fare they in their mortal tasks  
Upon Earth’s bounded bord ?

## IV

“The fate of those I bear,  
Dear lord, pray turn and view,  
And notify me true ;  
Shapings that eyelessly I dare  
Maybe I would undo.

## V

“Sometimes from lairs of life  
Methinks I catch a groan,  
Or multitudinous moan,

As though I had schemed a world of strife,  
Working by touch alone."

## VI

"World-weaver!" he replies,  
"I scan all thy domain;  
But since nor joy nor pain  
It lies in me to recognize,  
Thy questionings are vain.

## VII

"World-weaver! what is Grief?  
And what are Right, and Wrong,  
And Feeling, that belong  
To creatures all who owe thee fief?  
Why is Weak worse than Strong?"...

## VIII

—Unanswered, curious, meek,  
She broods in sad surmise. . . .  
—Some say they have heard her sighs  
On Alpine height or Polar peak  
When the night tempests rise.

## THE PROBLEM

**S**HALL we conceal the Case, or tell it—  
We who believe the evidence?

Here and there the watch-towers knell it

With a sullen significance,

Heard of the few who hearken intently and  
carry an eagerly upstrained sense.

Hearts that are happiest hold not by it ;  
Better we let, then, the old view reign ;  
Since there is peace in that, why decry it ?  
Since there is comfort, why disdain ?  
Note not the pigment so long as the painting  
determines humanity's joy and pain.



## THE SUBALTERNS

### I

“**P**OOOR wanderer,” said the leaden sky,  
    “I fain would lighten thee,  
But there are laws in force on high  
    Which say it must not be.”

### II

—“I would not freeze thee, shorn one,” cried  
    The North, “knew I but how

To warm my breath, to slack my stride ;  
But I am ruled as thou."

## III

—"To-morrow I attack thee, wight,"  
Said Sickness. "Yet I swear  
I bear thy little ark no spite,  
But am bid enter there."

## IV

—"Come hither, Son," I heard Death say ;  
"I did not will a grave  
Should end thy pilgrimage to-day,  
But I, too, am a slave !"

## V

We smiled upon each other then,  
And life to me had less  
Of that fell look it wore ere when  
They owned their passiveness.

## THE SLEEP-WORKER

**W**HEN wilt thou wake, O Mother, wake  
and see—

As one who, held in trance, has laboured long  
By vacant rote and prepossession strong—  
The coils that thou hast wrought unwittingly ;

Wherein have place, unrealized by thee,  
Fair growths, foul cankers, right enmeshed  
with wrong,  
Strange orchestras of victim-shriek and song,  
And curious blends of ache and ecstasy ?—

Should that morn come, and show thy opened  
eyes

All that Life's palpitating tissues feel,  
How wilt thou bear thyself in thy surprise?—

Wilt thou destroy, in one wild shock of shame,  
Thy whole high heaving firmamental frame,  
Or patiently adjust, amend, and heal?

## THE BULLFINCHES

**B**ROTHER Bulleys, let us sing  
From the dawn till evening !—  
For we know not that we go not  
When to-day's pale pinions fold  
Where they be that sang of old.

When I flew to Blackmoor Vale,  
Whence the green-gowned faeries hail,  
Roosting near them I could hear them  
Speak of queenly Nature's ways,  
Means, and moods,—well known to fays.

All we creatures, nigh and far  
(Said they there), the Mother's are ;  
Yet she never shows endeavour  
To protect from warrings wild  
Bird or beast she calls her child.

Busy in her handsome house  
Known as Space, she falls a-drowse ;  
Yet, in seeming, works on dreaming,  
While beneath her groping hands  
Fiends make havoc in her bands.

How her hussif'ry succeeds  
She unknowns or she unheeds,  
All things making for Death's taking !  
—So the green-gowned faeries say  
Living over Blackmoor way.

Come then, brethren, let us sing,  
From the dawn till evening !—  
For we know not that we go not  
When to-day's pale pinions fold  
Where those be that sang of old.

## GOD-FORGOTTEN

**I** TOWERED far, and lo ! I stood within  
The presence of the Lord Most High,  
Sent thither by the sons of Earth, to win  
Some answer to their cry.

—“The Earth, sayest thou ? The Human  
race ?

By Me created ? Sad its lot ?

Nay : I have no remembrance of such place :  
Such world I fashioned not.”—

—"O Lord, forgive me when I say  
Thou spakest the word that made it  
all."—

"The Earth of men—let me bethink me. . . .  
Yea!

I dimly do recall

"Some tiny sphere I built long back  
(Mid millions of such shapes of mine)  
So named . . . It perished, surely—not a  
wrack

Remaining, or a sign?

"It lost my interest from the first,  
My aims therefor succeeding ill;  
Haply it died of doing as it durst?"—

"Lord, it existeth still."—

"Dark, then, its life! For not a cry  
Of aught it bears do I now hear;  
Of its own act the threads were snapt whereby  
Its plaints had reached mine ear.

"It used to ask for gifts of good,  
Till came its severance, self-entailed,



When sudden silence on that side ensued,  
And has till now prevailed.

“All other orbs have kept in touch ;  
Their voicings reach me speedily :  
Thy people took upon them overmuch  
In sundering them from me !

“And it is strange—though sad enough—  
Earth’s race should think that one whose  
call  
Frames, daily, shining spheres of flawless stuff  
Must heed their tainted ball ! . . .

“But sayest it is by pangs distraught,  
And strife, and silent suffering?—  
Sore grieved am I that injury should be  
wrought  
Even on so poor a thing !

“Thou shouldst have learnt that *Not to  
Mend*  
For Me could mean but *Not to Know* :  
Hence, Messengers ! and straightway put an end  
To what men undergo.” . . .

Homing at dawn, I thought to see  
One of the Messengers standing by.  
—Oh, childish thought ! . . . Yet often it comes  
to me  
When trouble hovers nigh.

## THE BEDRIDDEN PEASANT

TO AN UNKNOWING GOD

**M**UCH wonder I—here long low-laid—  
That this dead wall should be  
Betwixt the Maker and the made,  
Between Thyself and me !

For, say one puts a child to nurse,  
He eyes it now and then  
To know if better it is, or worse,  
And if it mourn, and when.

But Thou, Lord, giv'st us men our day  
    In helpless bondage thus  
To Time and Chance, and seem'st straightway  
    To think no more of us !

That some disaster cleft Thy scheme  
    And tore it wide apart,  
So that no cry can cross, I deem ;  
    For Thou art mild of heart,

And wouldst not shape and shut us in  
    Where voice can not be heard :  
Plainly thou meant'st that we should win  
    Thy succour by a word.

Might but Thy sense flash down the skies  
    Like man's from clime to clime,  
Thou wouldst not let me agonize  
    Through my remaining time ;

But, seeing how much Thy creatures bear—  
    Lame, starved, or maimed, or blind—  
Wouldst heal the ills with quickest care  
    Of me and all my kind.

Then, since Thou mak'st not these things be,  
But these things dost not know,  
I'll praise Thee as were shown to me  
The mercies Thou wouldst show!

## BY THE EARTH'S CORPSE

### I

“O LORD, why grievest Thou?—  
Since Life has ceased to be  
Upon this globe, now cold  
As lunar land and sea,  
And humankind, and fowl, and fur  
Are gone eternally,  
All is the same to Thee as ere  
They knew mortality.”

## II

"O Time," replied the Lord,  
"Thou readest me ill, I ween ;  
Were all *the same*, I should not grieve  
At that late earthly scene,  
Now blestly past—though planned by me  
With interest close and keen !—  
Nay, nay : things now are *not* the same  
As they have earlier been.

## III

"Written indelibly  
On my eternal mind  
Are all the wrongs endured  
By Earth's poor patient kind,  
Which my too oft unconscious hand  
Let enter undesigned.  
No god can cancel deeds foredone.  
Or thy old coils unwind !

## IV

"As when, in Noë's days,  
I whelmed the plains with sea,

So at this last, when flesh  
And herb but fossils be,  
And, all extinct, their piteous dust  
Revolves obliviously,  
That I made Earth, and life, and man,  
It still repenteth me !”



## MUTE OPINION

### I

**I** TRAVERSED a dominion  
Whose spokesmen spake out strong  
Their purpose and opinion  
Through pulpit, press, and song.  
I scarce had means to note there  
A large-eyed few, and dumb,  
Who thought not as those thought there  
That stirred the heat and hum.

## II

When, grown a Shade, beholding  
That land in lifetime trode,  
To learn if its unfolding  
Fulfilled its clamoured code,  
I saw, in web unbroken,  
Its history outwrought  
Not as the loud had spoken,  
But as the mute had thought.

## TO AN UNBORN PAUPER CHILD

1

BREATHE not, hid Heart : cease silently,  
And though thy birth-hour beckons  
thee,  
Sleep the long sleep :  
The Doomsters heap  
Travails and teens around us here,  
And Time-wraiths turn our songsingings to  
fear.

## II

Hark, how the peoples surge and sigh,  
 And laughters fail, and greetings die :  
     Hopes dwindle ; yea,  
     Faiths waste away,  
 Affections and enthusiasms numb ;  
 Thou canst not mend these things if thou dost  
     come.

## III

Had I the ear of wombèd souls  
 Ere their terrestrial chart unrolls,  
     And thou wert free  
     To cease, or be,  
 Then would I tell thee all I know,  
 And put it to thee : Wilt thou take Life so ?

## IV

Vain vow ! No hint of mine may hence  
 To theeward fly : to thy locked sense  
     Explain none can  
     Life's pending plan :  
 Thou wilt thy ignorant entry make  
 Though skies spout fire and blood and nations  
     quake.

V

Fain would I, dear, find some shut plot  
Of earth's wide wold for thee, where not  
    One tear, one qualm,  
    Should break the calm.

But I am weak as thou and bare ;  
No man can change the common lot to rare.

VI

Must come and bide. And such are we--  
Unreasoning, sanguine, visionary--  
    That I can hope  
    Health, love, friends, scope  
In full for thee ; can dream thou'lt find  
Joys seldom yet attained by humankind !

TO FLOWERS FROM ITALY IN  
WINTER

SUNNED in the South, and here to-day ;  
—If all organic things

Be sentient, Flowers, as some men say,  
What are your ponderings ?

How can you stay, nor vanish quite  
From this bleak spot of thorn,  
And birch, and fir, and frozen white  
Expanse of the forlorn ?

Frail luckless exiles hither brought !  
Your dust will not regain  
Old sunny haunts of Classic thought  
When you shall waste and wane ;

But mix with alien earth, be lit  
With frigid Boreal flame,  
And not a sign remain in it  
To tell men whence you came.

## ON A FINE MORNING

### I

**W**HENCE comes Solace ? — Not  
from seeing  
What is doing, suffering, being,  
Not from noting Life's conditions,  
Nor from heeding Time's monitions ;  
But in cleaving to the Dream,  
And in gazing at the gleam  
Whereby gray things golden seem.



## II

Thus do I this heyday, holding  
Shadows but as lights unfolding,  
As no specious show this moment  
With its iris-hued embowment ;  
    But as nothing other than  
    Part of a benignant plan ;  
    Proof that earth was made for man.

*February, 1899.*

TO LIZBIE BROWNE

1

**D**EAR Lizbie Browne,  
Where are you now ?  
In sun, in rain ?—  
Or is your brow  
Past joy, past pain,  
Dear Lizbie Browne ?

## II

Sweet Lizbie Browne,  
How you could smile,  
How you could sing !—  
How archly wile  
In glance-giving,  
Sweet Lizbie Browne !

## III

And, Lizbie Browne,  
Who else had hair  
Bay-red as yours,  
Or flesh so fair  
Bred out of doors,  
Sweet Lizbie Browne ?

## IV

When, Lizbie Browne,  
You had just begun  
To be endeared  
By stealth to one,  
You disappeared  
My Lizbie Browne !

## V

Ay, Lizbie Browne,  
So swift your life,  
And mine so slow,  
You were a wife  
Ere I could show  
Love, Lizbie Browne.

## VI

Still, Lizbie Browne,  
You won, they said,  
The best of men  
When you were wed. . . .  
Where went you then,  
O Lizbie Browne ?

## VII

Dear Lizbie Browne,  
I should have thought,  
"Girls ripen fast,"  
And coaxed and caught  
You ere you passed,  
Dear Lizbie Browne !

## VIII

But, Lizbie Browne,  
I let you slip ;  
Shaped not a sign ;  
Touched never your lip  
With lip of mine,  
Lost Lizbie Browne !

## IX

So, Lizbie Browne,  
When on a day  
Men speak of me  
As not, you'll say,  
“And who was he ?”—  
Yes, Lizbie Browne !

## SONG OF HOPE

O SWEET To-morrow!—  
After to-day  
There will away

This sense of sorrow.

Then let us borrow

Hope, for a gleaming

Soon will be streaming,

Dimmed by no gray—

No gray!

While the winds wing us  
Sighs from The Gone,  
Nearer to dawn  
Minute-beats bring us ;  
When there will sing us  
Larks, of a glory  
Waiting our story  
Further anon—  
Anon !

Doff the black token,  
Don the red shoon,  
Right and retune  
Viol-strings broken ;  
Null the words spoken  
In speeches of rueing,  
The night cloud is hueing,  
To-morrow shines soon—  
Shines soon !

## THE WELL-BELOVED

I WENT by star and planet shine  
Towards the dear one's home  
At Kingsbere, there to make her mine  
When the next sun upclomb.

I edged the ancient hill and wood  
Beside the Ikling Way,  
Nigh where the Pagan temple stood  
In the world's earlier day.



And as I quick and quicker walked  
On gravel and on green,  
I sang to sky, and tree, or talked  
Of her I called my queen.

—“ O faultless is her dainty form,  
And luminous her mind ;  
She is the God-created norm  
Of perfect womankind ! ”

A shape whereon one star-blink gleamed  
Slid softly by my side,  
A woman's ; and her motion seemed  
The motion of my bride.

And yet methought she'd drawn erstwhile  
Out from the ancient leaze,  
Where once were pile and peristyle  
For men's idolatries.

—“ O maiden lithe and lone, what may  
Thy name and lineage be,  
Who so resemblest by this ray  
My darling ?—Art thou she ? ”

The Shape : "Thy bride remains within  
Her father's grange and grove."

—"Thou speakest rightly," I broke in,  
Thou art not she I love."

—"Nay : though thy bride remains inside  
Her father's walls," said she,  
"The one most dear is with thee here,  
For thou dost love but me."

Then I : "But she, my only choice,  
Is now at Kingsbere Grove?"  
Again her soft mysterious voice :  
"I am thy only Love."

Thus still she vouched, and still I said,  
"O sprite, that cannot be!" . . .  
It was as if my bosom bled,  
So much she troubled me.

The sprite resumed : "Thou hast transferred  
To her dull form awhile  
My beauty, fame, and deed, and word,  
My gestures and my smile.

“O fatuous man, this truth infer,  
Brides are not what they seem ;  
Thou lovest what thou dreamest her ;  
I am thy very dream !”

—“O then,” I answered miserably,  
Speaking as scarce I knew,  
“My loved one, I must wed with thee  
If what thou sayest be true !”

She, proudly thinning in the gloom :  
“Though, since troth-plight began,  
I have ever stood as bride to groom,  
I wed no mortal man !”

Thereat she vanished by the lane  
Adjoining Kingsbere town,  
Near where, men say, once stood the Fane  
To Venus, on the Down.

—When I arrived and met my bride,  
Her look was pinched and thin,  
As if her soul had shrunk and died,  
And left a waste within.

## HER REPROACH

CON the dead page as 'twere live love :  
press on !

Cold wisdom's words will ease thy track for  
thee ;

Aye, go ; cast off sweet ways, and leave me  
wan

To biting blasts that are intent on me.

But if thy object Fame's far summits be,  
Whose inclines many a skeleton overlies  
That missed both dream and substance, stop  
and see  
How absence wears these cheeks and dims  
these eyes !

It surely is far sweeter and more wise  
To water love, than toil to leave anon  
A name whose glory-gleam will but advise  
Invidious minds to eclipse it with their own,

And over which the kindest will but stay  
A moment ; musing, " He, too, had his day ! "

WESTBOURNE PARK VILLAS,  
1867.

## THE INCONSISTENT

I SAY, "She was as good as fair,"  
When standing by her mound :  
"Such passing sweetness," I declare,  
"No longer treads the ground."  
I say, "What living Love can catch  
Her bloom and bonhomie,  
And what in recent maidens match  
Her olden warmth to me !"

—There stands within yon vestry-nook  
Where bonded lovers sign,  
Her name upon a faded book  
With one that is not mine.  
To him she breathed the tender vow  
She once had breathed to me,  
But yet I say, “O Love, even now  
Would I had died for thee!”

## A BROKEN APPOINTMENT

YOU did not come,  
And marching Time drew  
on, and wore me numb.—

Yet less for loss of your dear presence there  
Than that I thus found lacking in your make  
That high compassion which can overbear  
Reluctance for pure lovingkindness' sake  
Grieved I, when, as the hope-hour stroked its  
sum,

You did not come.



You love not me,  
And love alone can lend you loyalty ;  
—I know and knew it. But, unto the store  
Of human deeds divine in all but name,  
Was it not worth a little hour or more  
To add yet this : Once, you, a woman, came  
To soothe a time-torn man ; even though  
it be

You love not me ?

“BETWEEN US NOW”

BETWEEN us now and here—  
Two thrown together  
Who are not wont to wear  
Life's flushest feather—  
Who see the scenes slide past,  
The daytimes dimming fast,  
Let there be truth at last,  
Even if despair.

So thoroughly and long  
    Have you now known me,  
So real in faith and strong  
    Have I now shown me,  
That nothing needs disguise  
Further in any wise,  
Or asks or justifies  
    A guarded tongue.

Face unto face, then, say,  
    Eyes my own meeting,  
Is your heart far away,  
    Or with mine beating ?  
When false things are brought low,  
And swift things have grown slow,  
Feigning like froth shall go,  
    Faith be for aye.

## “HOW GREAT MY GRIEF”

(TRIOLET)

**H**OW great my grief, my joys how few,  
Since first it was my fate to know  
thee !

—Have the slow years not brought to view

How great my grief, my joys how few,

Nor memory shaped old times anew,

Nor loving-kindness helped to show thee

How great my grief, my joys how few,

Since first it was my fate to know thee ?

## “I NEED NOT GO”

I NEED not go  
Through sleet and snow  
To where I know  
She waits for me ;  
She will tarry me there  
Till I find it fair,  
And have time to spare  
From company.

When I've overgot  
The world somewhat,  
When things cost not  
Such stress and strain,

Is soon enough  
By cypress sough  
To tell my Love  
I am come again.

And if some day,  
When none cries nay,  
I still delay  
To seek her side,  
(Though ample measure  
Of fitting leisure  
Await my pleasure)  
She will not chide.

What—not upbraid me  
That I delayed me,  
Nor ask what stayed me  
So long? Ah, no!—  
New cares may claim me,  
New loves inflame me,  
She will not blame me,  
But suffer it so.

## THE COQUETTE, AND AFTER

(TRIOLETS)

### I

FOR long the cruel wish I knew  
That your free heart should ache for me  
While mine should bear no ache for you ;  
For long—the cruel wish !—I knew  
How men can feel, and craved to view  
My triumph—fated not to be  
For long ! . . . The cruel wish I knew  
That your free heart should ache for me !

## II

At last one pays the penalty—  
The woman—women always do.  
My farce, I found, was tragedy  
At last!—One pays the penalty  
With interest when one, fancy-free,  
Learns love, learns shame. . . . Of sinners  
two

At last *one* pays the penalty—  
The woman—women always do!



## A SPOT

**I**N years defaced and lost,  
Two sat here, transport-tossed,  
Lit by a living love  
The wilted world knew nothing of :  
Scared momentarily  
By gaingivings,  
Then hoping things  
That could not be. . . .

Of love and us no trace  
Abides upon the place ;  
The sun and shadows wheel,  
Season and season sereward steal ;  
Foul days and fair  
Here, too, prevail,  
And gust and gale  
As everywhere.

But lonely shepherd souls  
Who bask amid these knolls  
May catch a faery sound  
On sleepy noontides from the ground :  
“ O not again  
Till Earth outwears  
Shall love like theirs  
Suffuse this glen ! ”

## LONG PLIGHTED

**I**S it worth while, dear, now,  
To call for bells, and sally forth arrayed  
For marriage-rites — discussed, decried, de-  
layed

So many years ?

Is it worth while, dear, now,  
To stir desire for old fond purposings,  
By feints that Time still serves for dallings,  
Though quittance nears ?

Is it worth while, dear, when  
The day being so far spent, so low the sun,  
The undone thing will soon be as the done,  
And smiles as tears ?

Is it worth while, dear, when  
Our cheeks are worn, our early brown is gray ;  
When, meet or part we, none says yea or nay,  
Or heeds, or cares ?

Is it worth while, dear, since  
We still can climb old Yell'ham's wooded  
mounds  
Together, as each season steals its rounds  
And disappears ?

Is it worth while, dear, since  
As mates in Mellstock churchyard we can lie,  
Till the last crash of all things low and high  
Shall end the spheres ?

## THE WIDOW BETROTHED

I PASSED the lodge and avenue  
To her fair tenement,  
And sunset on her window-panes  
Reflected our intent.

The creeper on the gable nigh  
Was fired to more than red,  
And when I came to halt thereby  
"Bright as my joy!" I said.

Of late days it had been her aim  
 To meet me in the hall ;  
 Now at my footsteps no one came,  
 And no one to my call.

Again I knocked, and tardily  
 An inner tread was heard,  
 And I was shown her presence then  
 With a mere answering word.

She met me, and but barely took  
 My proffered warm embrace ;  
 Preoccupation weighed her look,  
 And hardened her sweet face.

“To-morrow—could you—would you call?  
 Abridge your present stay?  
 My child is ill—my one, my all!—  
 And can’t be left to-day.”

And then she turns, and gives commands  
 As I were out of sound,  
 Or were no more to her and hers  
 Than any neighbour round. . . .

—As maid I loved her ; but one came  
And pleased, and coaxed, and wooed,  
And when in time he wedded her  
I deemed her gone for good.

He won, I lost her ; and my loss  
I bore I know not how ;  
But I do think I suffered then  
Less wretchedness than now.

For Time, in taking him, unclosed  
An unexpected door  
Of bliss for me, which grew to seem  
Far surer than before.

Yet in my haste I overlooked  
When secondly I sued  
That then, as not at first, she had learnt  
The call of motherhood. . . .

Her word is steadfast, and I know  
How firmly pledged are we :  
But a new love-claim shares her since  
She smiled as maid on me !

## AT A HASTY WEDDING

(TRIOLET)

**I**F hours be years the twain are blest,  
For now they solace swift desire  
By bonds of every bond the best,  
If hours be years. The twain are blest  
Do eastern stars slope never west,  
Nor pallid ashes follow fire :  
If hours be years the twain are blest,  
For now they solace swift desire.



## THE DREAM-FOLLOWER

A DREAM of mine flew over the mead  
To the halls where my old Love  
reigns ;

And it drew me on to follow its lead :  
And I stood at her window-panes ;

And I saw but a thing of flesh and bone  
Speeding on to its cleft in the clay ;  
And my dream was scared, and expired on a  
moan,  
And I whitely hastened away.

## HIS IMMORTALITY

### I

**I** SAW a dead man's finer part  
Shining within each faithful heart  
Of those bereft. Then said I : " This must be  
His immortality."

### II

I looked there as the seasons wore,  
And still his soul continuously bore  
A life in theirs. But less its shine excelled  
Than when I first beheld.

## III

His fellow-years-men passed, and then  
In later hearts I looked for him again ;  
And found him—shrunk, alas ! into a thin  
And spectral mannikin.

## IV

Lastly I ask—now old and chill—  
If aught of him remain unperished still ;  
And find, in me alone, a feeble spark,  
Dying amid the dark.

*February, 1899.*

## THE TO-BE-FORGOTTEN

I

I HEARD a small sad sound,  
And stood awhile among the  
tombs around :

“Wherefore, old friends,” said I, “are you  
distrest,

Now, screened from life’s unrest ?”

## II

—“O not at being here ;  
But that our future second death is near ;  
When, with the living, memory of us numbs,  
And blank oblivion comes !

## III

“These, our sped ancestry,  
Lie here embraced by deeper death than we ;  
Nor shape nor thought of theirs can you  
descry  
With keenest backward eye.

## IV

“They count as quite forgot ;  
They are as men who have existed not ;  
Theirs is a loss past loss of fitful breath ;  
It is the second death.

## V

“We here, as yet, each day  
Are blest with dear recall ; as yet can say  
We hold in some soul loved continuance  
Of shape and voice and glance.

## VI

“ But what has been will be—  
First memory, then oblivion’s swallowing sea;  
Like men foregone, shall we merge into those  
Whose story no one knows.

## VII

“ For which of us could hope  
To show in life that world-awakening scope  
Granted the few whose memory none lets die,  
But all men magnify ?

## VIII

“ We were but Fortune’s sport ;  
Things true, things lovely, things of good  
report  
We neither shunned nor sought . . . We  
see our bourne,  
And seeing it we mourn.”

## WIVES IN THE SERE

### I

**N**EVER a careworn wife but shows,  
    If a joy suffuse her,  
Something beautiful to those  
    Patient to peruse her,  
Some one charm the world unknowns  
    Precious to a muser,  
Haply what, ere years were foes,  
    Moved her mate to choose her.

## II

But, be it a hint of rose  
That an instant hues her,  
Or some early light or pose  
Wherewith thought renews her—  
Seen by him at full, ere woes  
Practised to abuse her—  
Sparely comes it, swiftly goes,  
Time again subdues her.



## THE SUPERSEDED

### I

**A**S newer comers crowd the fore,  
We drop behind.  
—We who have laboured long and sore  
Times out of mind,  
And keen are yet, must not regret  
To drop behind.

## II

Yet there are some of us who grieve  
    To go behind ;  
Staunch, strenuous souls who scarce believe  
    Their fires declined,  
And know none spares, remembers, cares  
    Who go behind.

## III

'Tis not that we have unforetold  
    The drop behind ;  
We feel the new must oust the old  
    In every kind ;  
But yet we think, must we, must *we*,  
    Too, drop behind ?

## AN AUGUST MIDNIGHT

I

A SHADED lamp and a waving blind,  
And the beat of a clock from a distant  
floor :

On this scene enter — winged, horned, and  
spined—

A longlegs, a moth, and a dumbledore ;  
While 'mid my page there idly stands  
A sleepy fly, that rubs its hands . . .

## II

Thus meet we five, in this still place,  
At this point of time, at this point in space.  
—My guests besmear my new-penned line,  
Or bang at the lamp, and sink supine.  
“God’s humblest, they !” I muse. Yet why ?  
They know Earth-secrets that know not I.

MAX GATE, 1899.

## THE CAGED THRUSH FREED AND HOME AGAIN

(VILLANELLE)

“ **M**EN know but little more than we,  
Who count us least of things terrene,  
How happy days are made to be !

“ Of such strange tidings what think ye,  
O birds in brown that peck and preen ?  
Men know but little more than we !

“When I was borne from yonder tree  
In bonds to them, I hoped to glean  
How happy days are made to be,

“And want and wailing turned to glee ;  
Alas, despite their mighty mien  
Men know but little more than we !

“They cannot change the Frost’s decree,  
They cannot keep the skies serene ;  
How happy days are made to be

“Eludes great Man’s sagacity  
No less than ours, O tribes in treen !  
Men know but little more than we  
How happy days are made to be.”

## BIRDS AT WINTER NIGHTFALL

(TRIOLET)

**A**ROUND the house the flakes fly faster,  
And all the berries now are gone  
From holly and cotonea-aster  
Around the house. The flakes fly !—faster  
Shutting indoors that crumb-outcaster  
We used to see upon the lawn  
Around the house. The flakes fly faster,  
And all the berries now are gone !

MAX GATE

## THE PUZZLED GAME-BIRDS

(TRIOLET)

THEY are not those who used to feed us  
When we were young—they cannot  
be—

These shapes that now bereave and bleed us ?  
They are not those who used to feed us,  
For did we then cry, they would heed us.  
—If hearts can house such treachery  
They are not those who used to feed us  
When we were young—they cannot be !



## WINTER IN DURNOVER FIELD

SCENE.—A wide stretch of fallow ground recently sown with wheat, and frozen to iron hardness. Three large birds walking about thereon, and wistfully eyeing the surface. Wind keen from north-east: sky a dull grey.

(TRIOLET)

*Rook*.—Throughout the field I find no grain;  
The cruel frost encrusts the cornland !

*Starling*.—Aye : patient pecking now is vain  
Throughout the field, I find . . .

*Rook*.—No grain !

*Pigeon.*—Nor will be, comrade, till it rain,  
Or genial thawings loose the lorn land  
Throughout the field.

*Rook.*— I find no grain :  
The cruel frost encrusts the cornland !

## THE LAST CHRYSANTHEMUM

**W**HY should this flower delay so long  
To show its tremulous plumes ?  
Now is the time of plaintive robin-song,  
When flowers are in their tombs.

Through the slow summer, when the sun  
Called to each frond and whorl  
That all he could for flowers was being done,  
Why did it not uncurl ?

It must have felt that fervid call  
Although it took no heed,  
Waking but now, when leaves like corpses fall,  
And saps all retrocede.

Too late its beauty, lonely thing,  
The season's shine is spent,  
Nothing remains for it but shivering  
In tempests turbulent.

Had it a reason for delay,  
Dreaming in witlessness  
That for a bloom so delicately gay  
Winter would stay its stress?

—I talk as if the thing were born  
With sense to work its mind;  
Yet it is but one mask of many worn  
By the Great Face behind.

## THE DARKLING THRUSH

I LEANT upon a coppice gate  
When Frost was spectre-gray,  
And Winter's dregs made desolate  
The weakening eye of day.  
The tangled bine-stems scored the sky  
Like strings of broken lyres,  
And all mankind that haunted nigh  
Had sought their household fires.

The land's sharp features seemed to be  
The Century's corpse outleant,  
His crypt the cloudy canopy,  
The wind his death-lament.  
The ancient pulse of germ and birth  
Was shrunken hard and dry,  
And every spirit upon earth  
Seemed fervourless as I.

At once a voice arose among  
The bleak twigs overhead  
In a full-hearted evensong  
Of joy illimited ;  
An aged thrush, frail, gaunt, and small,  
In blast-beruffled plume,  
Had chosen thus to fling his soul  
Upon the growing gloom.

So little cause for carolings  
Of such ecstatic sound  
Was written on terrestrial things  
Afar or nigh around,

That I could think there trembled through  
His happy good-night air  
Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew  
And I was unaware.

*31st December, 1900.*

## THE COMET AT YELL'HAM

### I

**I**T bends far over Yell'ham Plain,  
And we, from Yell'ham Height,  
Stand and regard its fiery train,  
So soon to swim from sight.

### II

It will return long years hence, when  
As now its strange swift shine  
Will fall on Yell'ham ; but not then  
On that sweet form of thine.



## MAD JUDY

**W**HEN the hamlet hailed a birth  
Judy used to cry :  
When she heard our christening mirth  
She would kneel and sigh.  
She was crazed, we knew, and we  
Humoured her infirmity.

When the daughters and the sons  
Gathered them to wed,  
And we like-intending ones  
Danced till dawn was red,  
She would rock and mutter, " More  
Comers to this stony shore ! "

When old Headsman Death laid hands  
On a babe or twain,  
She would feast, and by her brands  
Sing her songs again.  
What she liked we let her do,  
Judy was insane, we knew.

## A WASTED ILLNESS

(OVERHEARD)

**T**HROUGH vaults of pain,  
Enribbed and wrought with  
groins of ghastliness,  
I passed, and garish spectres moved my brain  
To dire distress.

And hammerings,  
And quakes, and shoots, and stifling hotness,  
blent  
With webby waxing things and waning things  
As on I went.

“Where lies the end  
To this foul way?” I asked with weakening  
breath.

Thereon ahead I saw a door extend—  
The door to Death.

It loomed more clear :  
“At last !” I cried. “The all-delivering door !”  
And then, I knew not how, it grew less near  
Than theretofore.

And back slid I  
Along the galleries by which I came,  
And tediously the day returned, and sky,  
And life—the same.

And all was well :  
Old circumstance resumed its former show,  
And on my head the dews of comfort fell  
As ere my woe.

I roam anew,  
Scarce conscious of my late distress. . . . And  
yet

Those backward steps to strength I cannot  
view

Without regret.

For that dire train  
Of waxing shapes and waning, passed before,  
And those grim chambers, must be ranged again  
To reach that door,

## A MAN

(IN MEMORY OF H. OF M.)

### I

**I**N Casterbridge there stood a noble pile,  
Wrought with pilaster, bay, and balus-  
trade

In tactful times when shrewd Eliza swayed.—

On burgher, squire, and clown

It smiled the long street down for near a mile.

## II

But evil days beset that domicile ;  
The stately beauties of its roof and wall  
Passed into sordid hands. Condemned to  
fall

Were cornice, quoin, and cove,  
And all that art had wove in antique style.

## III

Among the hired dismantlers entered there  
One till the moment of his task untold.  
When charged therewith he gazed, and  
answered bold :

“ Be needy I or no,  
I will not help lay low a house so fair !

## IV

“ Hunger is hard. But since the terms be  
such—  
No wage, or labour stained with the dis-  
grace

Of wrecking what our age cannot replace  
    To save its tasteless soul—  
I'll do without your dole. Life is not much !”

## V

Dismissed with sneers he backed his tools and  
    went,  
And wandered workless ; for it seemed  
    unwise  
To close with one who dared to criticize  
    And carp on points of taste :  
Rude men should work where placed, and be  
    content.

## VI

Years whiled. He aged, sank, sickened, and  
    was not :  
And it was said, “ A man intractable  
And curst is gone.” None sighed to hear his  
    knell,  
    None sought his churchyard-place ;  
His name, his rugged face, were soon  
    forgot.



## VII

The stones of that fair hall lie far and wide,  
And but a few recall its ancient mould ;  
Yet when I pass the spot I long to hold

As truth what fancy saith :

“His protest lives where deathless things  
abide !”

## THE DAME OF ATHELHALL

### I

“**D**EAR! Shall I see thy face,” she said,  
“In one brief hour?”

And away with thee from a loveless bed  
To a far-off sun, to a vine-wrapt bower,  
And be thine own unseparated,

And challenge the world's white  
glower?”

## II

She quickened her feet, and met him where  
    They had predestined :  
And they clasped, and mounted, and cleft the  
    air  
Upon whirling wheels ; till the will to bind  
Her life with his made the moments there  
    Efface the years behind.

## III

Miles slid, and the port uprose to view  
    As they sped on ;  
When slipping its bond the bracelet flew  
From her fondled arm. Replaced anon,  
Its cameo of the abjured one drew  
    Her musings thereupon.

## IV

The gaud with his image once had been  
    A gift from him :  
And so it was that its carving keen  
Refurbished memories wearing dim,  
Which set in her soul a twinge of teen,  
    And a tear on her lashes' brim.

## V

"I may not go!" she at length upspoke,

"Thoughts call me back—"

I would still lose all for your dear, true sake;

My heart is thine, friend! But my track

Home, home to Athelhall I must take

To hinder household wrack!"

## VI

He was wroth. And they parted, weak and wan;

And he left the shore;

His ship diminished, was low, was gone;

And she heard in the waves as the daytide  
wore,

And read in the leer of the sun that shone,

That they parted for evermore.

## VII

She homed as she came, at the dip of eve

On Athel Coomb

Regaining the Hall she had sworn to leave.

The house was soundless as a tomb,

And she stole to her chamber, there to grieve

Lone, kneeling, in the gloom.

## VIII

From the lawn without rose her husband's voice

To one his friend :

" Another her Love, another my choice,  
Her going is good. Our conditions mend ;  
In a change of mates we shall both rejoice ;  
I hoped that it thus might end !

## IX

" A quick divorce ; she will make him hers,  
And I wed mine.

So Time rights all things in long, long years—  
Or rather she, by her bold design !

I admire a woman no balk deters :  
She has blessed my life, in fine.

## X

" I shall build new rooms for my new true  
bride,

Let the bygone be :

By now, no doubt, she has crossed the tide  
With the man to her mind. Far happier she  
In some warm vineland by his side  
Than ever she was with me."

## THE SEASONS OF HER YEAR

### I

**W**INTER is white on turf and tree,  
And birds are fled ;  
But summer songsters pipe to me,  
And petals spread,  
For what I dreamt of secretly  
His lips have said !

## II

O 'tis a fine May morn, they say,  
And blooms have blown ;  
But wild and wintry is my day,  
My songbirds moan ;  
For he who vowed leaves me to pay  
Alone—alone !

## THE MILKMAID

UNDER a daisied bank,  
There stands a rich red ruminating cow,  
And hard against her flank  
A cotton-hooded milkmaid bends her brow.  
  
The flowery river-ooze  
Uplifts and falls ; the milk purrs in the pail ;  
Few pilgrims but would choose  
The peace of such a life in such a vale.



The maid breathes words—to vent,  
It seems, her sense of Nature's scenery,  
Of whose life, sentiment,  
And essence, very part itself is she.

She bends a glance of pain,  
And, at a moment, lets escape a tear ;  
Is it that passing train,  
Whose alien whirr offends her country ear ?—

Nay ! Phyllis does not dwell  
On visual and familiar things like these ;  
What moves her is the spell  
Of inner themes and inner poetries :

Could but by Sunday morn  
Her gay new gown come, meads might dry to  
dun,  
Trains shriek till ears were torn,  
If Fred would not prefer that Other One.

## THE LEVELLED CHURCHYARD

“O PASSENGER, pray list and catch  
Our sighs and piteous groans,  
Half stifled in this jumbled patch  
Of wrenched memorial stones !

“We late-lamented, resting here,  
Are mixed to human jam,  
And each to each exclaims in fear,  
‘I know not which I am !’

“The wicked people have annexed  
The verses on the good ;  
A roaring drunkard sports the text  
Teetotal Tommy should !

“Where we are huddled none can trace,  
And if our names remain,  
They pave some path or porch or place  
Where we have never lain !

“Here’s not a modest maiden elf  
But dreads the final Trumpet,  
Lest half of her should rise herself,  
And half some sturdy strumpet !

“From restorations of Thy fane,  
From smoothings of Thy sward,  
From zealous Churchmen’s pick and plane  
Deliver us, O Lord ! Amen !”

## THE RUINED MAID

“O 'MELIA, my dear, this does every-  
thing crown !

Who could have supposed I should meet you  
in Town ?

And whence such fair garments, such pros-  
peri-ty ?”—

“O didn't you know I'd been ruined ?” said  
she.

—“You left us in tatters, without shoes or  
socks,  
Tired of digging potatoes, and spudding up  
docks;  
And now you’ve gay bracelets and bright  
feathers three !”—

“Yes : that’s how we dress when we’re ruined,”  
said she.

—“At home in the barton you said ‘thee’  
and ‘thou,’  
And ‘thik oon,’ and ‘theäs oon,’ and ‘t’other’;  
but now  
Your talking quite fits ‘ee for high com-  
pa-ny !”—

“Some polish is gained with one’s ruin,” said  
she.

—“Your hands were like paws then, your  
face blue and bleak,  
But now I’m bewitched by your delicate cheek,  
And your little gloves fit as on any la-dy !”—  
“We never do work when we’re ruined,” said  
she.

—"You used to call home-life a hag-ridden  
dream,

And you'd sigh, and you'd sock; but at  
present you seem

To know not of megrims or melancho-ly!"—

"True. One's pretty lively when ruined," said  
she.

—"I wish I had feathers, a fine sweeping gown,  
And a delicate face, and could strut about  
Town!"—

"My dear—a raw country girl, such as you  
be,

Cannot quite expect that. You ain't ruined,"  
said she.

WESTBOURNE PARK VILLAS, 1866.

## THE RESPECTABLE BURGHER

ON "THE HIGHER CRITICISM"

SINCE Reverend Doctors now declare  
That clerks and people must prepare  
To doubt if Adam ever were ;  
To hold the flood a local scare ;  
To argue, though the stolid stare,  
That everything had happened ere  
The prophets to its happening sware ;  
That David was no giant-slayer,  
Nor one to call a God-obeyer

In certain details we could spare,  
But rather was a debonair  
Shrewd bandit, skilled as banjo-player :  
That Solomon sang the fleshly Fair,  
And gave the Church no thought whate'er ;  
That Esther with her royal wear,  
And Mordecai, the son of Jair,  
And Joshua's triumphs, Job's despair,  
And Balaam's ass's bitter blare ;  
Nebuchadnezzar's furnace-flare,  
And Daniel and the den affair,  
And other stories rich and rare,  
Were writ to make old doctrine wear  
Something of a romantic air :  
That the Nain widow's only heir,  
And Lazarus with cadaverous glare  
(As done in oils by Piombo's care)  
Did not return from Sheol's lair :  
That Jael set a fiendish snare,  
That Pontius Pilate acted square,  
That never a sword cut Malchus' ear ;  
And (but for shame I must forbear)  
That ——— did not reappear ! . . .



—Since thus they hint, nor turn a hair,  
All churchgoing will I forswear,  
And sit on Sundays in my chair,  
And read that moderate man Voltaire.

## ARCHITECTURAL MASKS

### I

**T**HERE is a house with ivied walls,  
And mullioned windows worn and  
old,  
And the long dwellers in those halls  
Have souls that know but sordid calls,  
And daily dote on gold.

## II

In blazing brick and plated show  
Not far away a "villa" gleams,  
And here a family few may know,  
With book and pencil, viol and bow,  
    Lead inner lives of dreams.

## III

The philosophic passers say,  
"See that old mansion mossed and fair,  
Poetic souls therein are they :  
And O that gaudy box ! Away,  
    You vulgar people there."

## THE TENANT-FOR-LIFE

**T**HE sun said, watching my watering-pot :  
“Some morn you’ll pass away ;  
These flowers and plants I parch up hot—  
Who’ll water them that day ?

“Those banks and beds whose shape your eye  
Has planned in line so true,  
New hands will change, unreasoning why  
Such shape seemed best to you.

“Within your house will strangers sit,  
And wonder how first it came ;  
They’ll talk of their schemes for improving it,  
And will not mention your name.

“They’ll care not how, or when, or at what  
You sighed, laughed, suffered here,  
Though you feel more in an hour of the spot  
Than they will feel in a year.

“As I look on at you here, now,  
Shall I look on at these ;  
But as to our old times, avow  
No knowledge—hold my peace ! . . .

“O friend, it matters not, I say ;  
Bethink ye, I have shined  
On nobler ones than you, and they  
Are dead men out of mind ! ”

## THE KING'S EXPERIMENT

**I**T was a wet wan hour in spring,  
And Nature met King Doom beside a  
lane,  
Wherein Hodge tramped, all blithely ballading  
The Mother's smiling reign.

“Why warbles he that skies are fair  
And coombs alight,” she cried, “and fallows  
gay,  
When I have placed no sunshine in the air  
Or glow on earth to-day?”

"'Tis in the comedy of things  
That such should be," returned the one of  
Doom ;

"Charge now the scene with brightest blazon-  
ings,  
And he shall call them gloom."

She gave the word : the sunbeams broke,  
All Froomside shone, the hedgebirds raised  
a strain ;  
And later Hodge, upon the midday stroke,  
Returned along the lane,

Low murmuring : "O this bitter scene,  
And thrice accurst horizon hung with  
gloom !  
How deadly like this sky, these fields, these  
treen,  
To trappings of the tomb !"

The Beldame then : "The fool and blind !  
Such mad perverseness who may appre-  
hend ?"—

"Nay; there's no madness in it; thou shalt find

Thy law there," said her friend.

"When Hodge went forth 'twas to his Love,  
To make her, ere this eve, his wedded prize,  
And Earth, despite the heaviness above,  
Was bright as Paradise.

"But I sent on my messenger,  
With cunning arrows poisonous and keen,  
To take forthwith her laughing life from her,  
And dull her little een,

"And white her cheek, and still her breath,  
Ere her too buoyant Hodge had reached her  
side;  
So, when he came, he clasped her but in death,  
And never as his bride.

"And there's the humour, as I said;  
Thy dreary dawn he saw as gleaming gold,  
And in thy glistening green and radiant red  
Funereal gloom and cold."



## THE TREE

### AN OLD MAN'S STORY

#### I

**I**TS roots are bristling in the air  
Like some mad Earth-god's spiny hair ;  
The loud south-wester's swell and yell  
Smote it at midnight, and it fell.

Thus ends the tree

Where Some One sat with me.

## II

Its boughs, which none but darers trod,  
A child may step on from the sod,  
And twigs that earliest met the dawn  
Are lit the last upon the lawn.

Cart off the tree

Beneath whose trunk sat we !

## III

Yes, there we sat : she cooed content,  
And bats ringed round, and daylight went ;  
The gnarl, our seat, is wrenched and sunk,  
Prone that queer pocket in the trunk

Where lay the key

To her pale mystery.

## IV

"Years back, within this pocket-hole  
I found, my Love, a hurried scrawl  
Meant not for me," at length said I ;  
"I glanced thereat, and let it lie :

The words were three—

*'Beloved, I agree.'*

## V

“Who placed it here ; to what request  
It gave assent, I never guessed.  
Some prayer of some hot heart, no doubt,  
To some coy maiden hereabout,  
Just as, maybe,  
With you, Sweet Heart, and me.”

## VI

She waited, till with quickened breath  
She spoke, as one who banisheth  
Reserves that lovecraft heeds so well,  
To ease some mighty wish to tell :  
“ ’Twas I,” said she,  
“ Who wrote thus clinchingly.

## VII

“ My lover’s wife—aye, wife !—knew nought  
Of what we felt, and bore, and thought. . . .  
He’d said : ‘ *I wed with thee or die :*  
*She stands between, ’tis true. But why ?*  
*Do thou agree,*  
*And—she shall cease to be.*’

## VIII

“How I held back, how love supreme  
Involved me madly in his scheme  
Why should I say ? . . . I wrote assent  
(You found it hid) to his intent. . . .

She—*died*. . . . But he  
Came not to wed with me.

## IX

“O shrink not, Love !—Had these eyes seen  
But once thine own, such had not been !  
But we were strangers. . . . Thus the plot  
Cleared passion’s path.—Why came he not

To wed with me ? . . .  
He wived the gibbet-tree.”

## X

—Under that oak of heretofore  
Sat Sweetheart mine with me no more :  
By many a Fiord, and Strom, and Fleuve  
Have I since wandered. . . . Soon, for love,  
Distraught went she—  
’Twas said for love of me.

## HER LATE HUSBAND

(KING'S-HINTOCK, 182--.)

“ **N**O—not where I shall make my  
own ;

But dig his grave just by  
The woman's with the initialed stone.—  
As near as he can lie—

After whose death he seemed to ail,  
Though none considered why.

“ And when I also claim a nook,  
And your feet tread me in,  
Bestow me, in my maiden name,  
Among my kith and kin,

That strangers gazing may not dream  
I did a husband win."

"Widow, your wish shall be obeyed ;  
Though, thought I, certainly  
You'd lay him where your folk are laid,  
And your grave, too, will be,  
As custom hath it ; you to right,  
And on the left hand he."

"Aye, sexton ; such the Hintock rule,  
And none has said it nay ;  
But now you find a native here  
Eschews that ancient way . . .  
And it may be, some Christmas night,  
When angels walk, they'll say :

" ' O strange interment ! Civilized lands  
Afford few types thereof ;  
Here is a man who takes his rest  
Beside his very Love,  
Beside the one who was his wife  
In our sight up above ! ' "

## THE SELF-UNSEEING

**H**ERE is the ancient floor,  
Footworn and hollowed and  
thin,

Here was the former door  
Where the dead feet walked in.

She sat here in her chair,  
Smiling into the fire ;  
He who played stood there,  
Bowing it higher and higher.

Childlike, I danced in a dream ;  
Blessings emblazoned that day ;  
Everything glowed with a gleam ;  
Yet we were looking away !



## IN TENEBRIS

### I

“Percussus sum sicut foenum, et aruit cor meum.”

—*Ps. ci.*

WINTERTIME nighs ;  
But my bereavement-  
pain

It cannot bring again :

Twice no one dies.

Flower-petals flee ;  
But, since it once hath been,  
No more that severing scene  
Can harrow me.

Birds faint in dread :  
I shall not lose old strength  
In the lone frost's black length :  
Strength long since fled !

Leaves freeze to dun ;  
But friends can not turn cold  
This season as of old  
For him with none.

Tempests may scath ;  
But love can not make smart  
Again this year his heart  
Who no heart hath.

Black is night's cope ;  
But death will not appal  
One who, past doubtings all,  
Waits in unhope.

## IN TENEBRIS

### II

“Considerabam ad dexteram, et videbam; et non erat  
qui cognosceret me. . . . Non est qui requirat  
animam meam.”—*Ps. cxli.*

WHEN the clouds' swoln bosoms echo  
back the shouts of the many and  
strong

That things are all as they best may be, save a  
few to be right ere long,

And my eyes have not the vision in them to  
discern what to these is so clear,  
The blot seems straightway in me alone ; one  
better he were not here.

The stout upstanders say, All's well with us :  
ruers have nought to rue !  
And what the potent say so oft, can it fail to  
be somewhat true ?  
Breezily go they, breezily come ; their dust  
smokes around their career,  
Till I think I am one born out of due time,  
who has no calling here.

Their dawns bring lusty joys, it seems ; their  
evenings all that is sweet ;  
Our times are blessed times, they cry : Life  
shapes it as is most meet,  
And nothing is much the matter ; there are  
many smiles to a tear ;  
Then what is the matter is I, I say. Why  
should such an one be here ? . . .

Let him in whose ears the low-voiced Best  
is killed by the clash of the First,  
Who holds that if way to the Better there be, it  
exacts a full look at the Worst,  
Who feels that delight is a delicate growth  
cramped by crookedness, custom, and fear,  
Get him up and be gone as one shaped awry;  
he disturbs the order here.

1895-96.

## IN TENEBRIS

### III

“Heu mihi, quia incolatus meus prolongatus est ! Habitavi cum habitantibus Cedar ; multum incola fuit anima mea.”—*Ps. cxix.*

**T**HERE have been times when I well  
might have passed and the ending  
have come—

Points in my path when the dark might have  
stolen on me, artless, unrueing—

Ere I had learnt that the world was a welter  
of futile doing :

Such had been times when I well might have  
passed, and the ending have come !

Say, on the noon when the half-sunny hours  
told that April was nigh,  
And I upgathered and cast forth the snow  
from the crocus-border,  
Fashioned and furbished the soil into a  
summer-seeming order,  
Glowing in gladsome faith that I quickened  
the year thereby.

Or on that loneliest of eves when afar and be-  
nighted we stood,  
She who upheld me and I, in the midmost  
of Egdon together,  
Confident I in her watching and ward through  
the blackening heather,  
Deeming her matchless in might and with  
measureless scope endued.

Or on that winter-wild night when, reclined by  
the chimney-nook quoin,  
Slowly a drowse overgat me, the smallest and  
feeblest of folk there,  
Weak from my baptism of pain ; when at  
times and anon I awoke there—  
Heard of a world wheeling on, with no listing  
or longing to join.

Even then ! while unweeting that vision could  
vex or that knowledge could numb,  
That sweets to the mouth in the belly are  
bitter, and tart, and untoward,  
Then, on some dim-coloured scene should my  
briefly raised curtain have lowered,  
Then might the Voice that is law have said  
“ Cease ! ” and the ending have come.



## THE CHURCH-BUILDER

### I

THE church flings forth a battled shade  
Over the moon-blanced sward ;  
The church ; my gift ; whereto I paid  
My all in hand and hoard ;  
Lavished my gains  
With stintless pains  
To glorify the Lord.

## II

I squared the broad foundations in  
Of ashlared masonry ;  
I moulded mullions thick and thin,  
Hewed fillet and ogee :  
I circleted  
Each sculptured head  
With nimb and canopy.

## III

I called in many a craftsman  
To fix emblazoned glass,  
To figure Cross and Sepulchre  
On dossal, boss, and brass.  
My gold all spent,  
My jewels went  
To gem the cups of Mass.

## IV

I borrowed deep to carve the screen  
And raise the ivoried Rood ;  
I parted with my small demesne  
To make my owings good.

Heir-looms unpriced  
I sacrificed,  
Until debt-free I stood.

## v

So closed the task. "Deathless the Creed  
Here substantanced !" said my soul :  
" I heard me bidden to this deed,  
And straight obeyed the call.  
Illume this fane,  
That not in vain  
I build it, Lord of all ! "

## vi

But, as it chanced me, then and there  
Did dire misfortunes burst ;  
My home went waste for lack of care,  
My sons rebelled and curst ;  
Till I confessed  
That aims the best  
Were looking like the worst.

## VII

Enkindled by my votive work  
    No burning faith I find ;  
The deeper thinkers sneer and smirk,  
    And give my toil no mind ;  
    From nod and wink  
    I read they think  
    That I am fool and blind.

## VIII

My gift to God seems futile, quite ;  
    The world moves as erstwhile ;  
And powerful Wrong on feeble Right  
    Tramples in olden style.  
    My faith burns down,  
    I see no crown ;  
    But Cares, and Grievs, and Guile.

## IX

So now, the remedy ? Yea, this :  
    I gently swing the door

Here, of my fane—no soul to wis—  
And cross the patterned floor  
To the rood-screen  
That stands between  
The nave and inner chore.

## x

The rich red windows dim the moon,  
But little light need I ;  
I mount the prie-dieu, lately hewn  
From woods of rarest dye ;  
Then from below  
My garment, so,  
I draw this cord, and tie

## xi

One end thereof around the beam  
Midway 'twixt Cross and truss :  
I noose the nethermost extreme,  
And in ten seconds thus  
I journey hence—  
To that land whence  
No rumour reaches us.

## XII

Well : Here at morn they'll light on one  
Dangling in mockery  
Of what he spent his substance on  
Blindly and uselessly ! . . .  
    " He might," they'll say,  
    " Have built, some way,  
A cheaper gallows-tree !"

## THE LOST PYX

### A MEDIÆVAL LEGEND<sup>1</sup>

SOME say the spot is banned ; that the  
pillar Cross-and-Hand  
Attests to a deed of hell ;  
But of else than of bale is the mystic tale  
That ancient Vale-folk tell.

<sup>1</sup> On a lonely table-land above the Vale of Blackmore, between High-Stoy and Bubb-Down hills, and commanding in clear weather views that extend from the English to the Bristol Channel, stands a pillar, apparently mediæval, called Cross-and-Hand or Christ-in-Hand. One tradition of its origin is mentioned in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* ; another, more detailed, preserves the story here given.

Ere Cernel's Abbey ceased hereabout there  
dwelt a priest,

(In later life sub-prior

Of the brotherhood there, whose bones are  
now bare

In the field that was Cernel choir).

One night in his cell at the foot of yon dell

The priest heard a frequent cry :

"Go, father, in haste to the cot on the waste,  
And shrive a man waiting to die."

Said the priest in a shout to the caller without,

"The night howls, the tree-trunks bow ;

One may barely by day track so rugged a way,  
And can I then do so now ?"

No further word from the dark was heard,

And the priest moved never a limb ;

And he slept and dreamed ; till a Visage seemed  
To frown from Heaven at him.

In a sweat he arose ; and the storm shrieked  
shrill,

And smote as in savage joy ;



While High-Stoy trees twanged to Bubb-Down  
Hill,

And Bubb-Down to High-Stoy.

There seemed not a holy thing in hail,  
Nor shape of light or love,  
From the Abbey north of Blackmore Vale  
To the Abbey south thereof.

Yet he plodded thence through the dark  
immense,

And with many a stumbling stride  
Through copse and briar climbed nigh and  
nigher  
To the cot and the sick man's side.

When he would have unslung the Vessels  
hung

To his arm in the steep ascent,  
He made loud moan : the Pyx was gone  
Of the Blessed Sacrament.

Then in dolorous dread he beat his head :  
“ No earthly prize or pelf  
Is the thing I've lost in tempest tossed,  
But the Body of Christ Himself ! ”

He thought of the Visage his dream revealed,  
And turned towards whence he came,  
Hands groping the ground along foot-track  
and field,  
And head in a heat of shame.

Till here on the hill, betwixt vill and vill,  
He noted a clear straight ray  
Stretching down from the sky to a spot hard by,  
Which shone with the light of day.

And gathered around the illumined ground  
Were common beasts and rare,  
All kneeling at gaze, and in pause profound  
Attent on an object there.

'Twas the Pyx, unharmed 'mid the circling rows  
Of Blackmore's hairy throng,  
Whereof were oxen, sheep, and does,  
And hares from the brakes among ;

And badgers grey, and conies keen,  
And squirrels of the tree,  
And many a member seldom seen  
Of Nature's family.

The ireful winds that scoured and swept  
Through coppice, clump, and dell,  
Within that holy circle slept  
Calm as in hermit's cell.

Then the priest bent likewise to the sod  
And thanked the Lord of Love,  
And Blessed Mary, Mother of God,  
And all the saints above.

And turning straight with his priceless freight,  
He reached the dying one,  
Whose passing sprite had been stayed for the  
rite  
Without which bliss hath none.

And when by grace the priest won place,  
And served the Abbey well,  
He reared this stone to mark where shone  
That midnight miracle.

## TESS'S LAMENT

### I

I WOULD that folk forgot me quite,  
                                Forgot me quite !  
I would that I could shrink from sight,  
                                And no more see the sun.  
Would it were time to say farewell,  
To claim my nook, to need my knell,  
Time for them all to stand and tell  
                                Of my day's work as done.

## II

Ah ! dairy where I lived so long,  
I lived so long ;  
Where I would rise up staunch and strong,  
And lie down hopefully.  
'Twas there within the chimney-seat  
He watched me to the clock's slow beat—  
Loved me, and learnt to call me Sweet,  
And whispered words to me.

## III

And now he's gone ; and now he's gone ; . . .  
                                And now he's gone !

The flowers we potted perhaps are thrown  
            To rot upon the farm.

And where we had our supper-fire  
May now grow nettle, dock, and briar,  
And all the place be mould and mire  
            So cozy once and warm.

## IV

And it was I who did it all,  
Who did it all;  
'Twas I who made the blow to fall

On him who thought no guile.  
Well, it is finished—past, and he  
Has left me to my misery,  
And I must take my Cross on me  
For wronging him awhile.

## v

How gay we looked that day we wed,  
That day we wed!  
“May joy be with ye!” they all said  
A-standing by the durn.  
I wonder what they say o’us now,  
And if they know my lot; and how  
She feels who milks my favourite cow,  
And takes my place at churn!

## vi

It wears me out to think of it,  
To think of it;  
I cannot bear my fate as writ,  
I’d have my life unbe;  
Would turn my memory to a blot,  
Make every relic of me rot,  
My doings be as they were not,  
And gone all trace of me!

## THE SUPPLANTER

A TALE

### I

**H**E bends his travel-tarnished feet  
To where she wastes in clay :  
From day-dawn until eve he fares  
Along the wintry way ;  
From day-dawn until eve he bears  
A wreath of blooms and bay.

## II

“Are these the gravestone shapes that meet  
My forward-straining view?  
Or forms that cross a window-blind  
In circle, knot, and queue:  
Gay forms, that cross and whirl and wind  
To music throbbing through?”—

## III

“The Keeper of the Field of Tombs  
Dwells by its gateway-pier;  
He celebrates with feast and dance  
His daughter’s twentieth year:  
He celebrates with wine of France  
The birthday of his dear.”—

## IV

“The gates are shut when evening glooms:  
Lay down your wreath, sad wight;  
To-morrow is a time more fit  
For placing flowers aright:  
The morning is the time for it;  
Come, wake with us to-night!”—



## V

He drops his wreath, and enters in,  
And sits, and shares their cheer.—  
“I fain would foot with you, young man,  
Before all others here ;  
I fain would foot it for a span  
With such a cavalier !”

## VI

She coaxes, clasps, nor fails to win  
His first-unwilling hand :  
The merry music strikes its staves,  
The dancers quickly band ;  
And with the Damsel of the Graves  
He duly takes his stand.

## VII

“You dance divinely, stranger swain,  
Such grace I’ve never known.  
O longer stay ! Breathe not adieu  
And leave me here alone !  
O longer stay : to her be true  
Whose heart is all your own !”—

## VIII

“ I mark a phantom through the pane,  
That beckons in despair,  
Its mouth all drawn with heavy moan—  
Her to whom once I swore ! ”—  
“ Nay ; 'tis the lately carven stone  
Of some strange girl laid there ! ”—

## IX

“ I see white flowers upon the floor  
Betrodden to a clot ;  
My wreath were they ? ”—“ Nay ; love me much,  
Swear you'll forget me not !  
'Twas but a wreath ! Full many such  
Are brought here and forgot.” . . .

## X

The watches of the night grow hoar,  
He wakens with the sun ;  
“ Now could I kill thee here ! ” he says,  
“ For winning me from one  
Who ever in her living days  
Was pure as cloistered nun ! ”

## XI

She cowers ; and, rising, roves he then  
Afar for many a mile,  
For evermore to be apart  
From her who could beguile  
His senses by her burning heart,  
And win his love awhile.

## XII

A year beholds him wend again  
To her who wastes in clay ;  
From day-dawn until eve he fares  
Along the wintry way,  
From day-dawn until eve repairs  
Towards her mound to pray.

## XIII

And there he sets him to fulfil  
His frustrate first intent :  
And lay upon her bed, at last,  
The offering earlier meant :  
When, on his stooping figure, ghast  
And haggard eyes are bent.

## XIV

“O surely for a little while  
    You can be kind to me !  
For do you love her, do you hate,  
    She knows not—cares not she :  
Only the living feel the weight  
    Of loveless misery !

## XV

“I own my sin ; I’ve paid its cost,  
    Being outcast, shamed, and bare :  
I give you daily my whole heart,  
    Your child my tender care,  
I pour you prayers ; this life apart  
    Is more than I can bear !”

## XVI

He turns—unpitying, passion-tossed ;  
    “ I know you not ! ” he cries,  
“ Nor know your child. I knew this maid,  
    But she’s in Paradise ! ”  
And he has vanished in the shade  
    From her beseeching eyes.

IMITATIONS, ETC.



## SAPPHIC FRAGMENT

“Thou shalt be—Nothing.”—OMAR KHAYYÁM.

“Tombless, with no remembrance.”—W. SHAKESPEARE.

D EAD shalt thou lie ; and nought  
Be told of thee or thought,  
For thou hast plucked not of the Muses' tree :  
And even in Hades' halls  
Amidst thy fellow-thralls  
No friendly shade thy shade shall company !

## CATULLUS: XXXI

(After passing Sirmione, April 1887.)

SIRMIO, thou dearest dear of strands  
That Neptune strokes in lake and sea,  
With what high joy from stranger lands  
Doth thy old friend set foot on thee !  
Yea, barely seems it true to me  
That no Bithynia holds me now,  
But calmly and assuringly  
Around me stretchest homely Thou.



Is there a scene more sweet than when  
Our clinging cares are undercast,  
And, worn by alien moils and men,  
The long untrodden sill repassed,  
We press the pined for couch at last,  
And find a full repayment there ?  
Then hail, sweet Sirmio ; thou that wast,  
And art, mine own unrivalled Fair !

## AFTER SCHILLER

**K** NIGHT, a true sister-love  
This heart retains ;  
Ask me no other love,  
That way lie pains !

Calm must I view thee come,  
Calm see thee go ;  
Tale-telling tears of thine  
I must not know !

## SONG FROM HEINE

**I** SCANNED her picture, dreaming,  
Till each dear line and hue  
Was imaged, to my seeming,  
As if it lived anew.

Her lips began to borrow  
Their former wondrous smile ;

Her fair eyes, faint with sorrow,  
Grew sparkling as erstwhile.

Such tears as often ran not  
Ran then, my love, for thee ;  
And O, believe I cannot  
That thou art lost to me !

## FROM VICTOR HUGO

**C**HILD, were I king, I'd yield my royal  
rule,

My chariot, sceptre, vassal-service due,  
My crown, my porphyry-basined waters cool,  
My fleets, whereto the sea is but a pool,  
For a glance from you !

Love, were I God, the earth and its heaving  
airs,

Angels, the demons abject under me,  
Vast chaos with its teeming womby lairs,  
Time, space, all would I give—aye, upper  
spheres,  
For a kiss from thee !

CARDINAL BEMBO'S EPITAPH  
ON RAPHAEL

**H**ERE'S one in whom Nature feared—  
faint at such vying—  
Eclipse while he lived, and decease at his  
dying.

## RETROSPECT





## "I HAVE LIVED WITH SHADES"

### I

I HAVE lived with Shades so long,  
And talked to them so oft,  
Since forth from cot and croft  
I went mankind among,  
That sometimes they  
In their dim style  
Will pause awhile  
To hear my say ;

II

And take me by the hand,  
 And lead me through their rooms  
 In the To-be, where Dooms  
 Half-wove and shapeless stand :  
     And show from there  
     The dwindled dust  
     And rot and rust  
     Of things that were.

III

"Now turn," they said to me  
 One day : "Look whence we came,  
 And signify his name  
 Who gazes thence at thee."—  
     —"Nor name nor race  
     Know I, or can,"  
     I said, "Of man  
     So commonplace.

IV

"He moves me not at all ;  
 I note no ray or jot

Of rareness in his lot,  
Or star exceptional.

Into the dim  
Dead throngs around  
He'll sink, nor sound  
Be left of him."

v

"Yet," said they, "his frail speech,  
Hath accents pitched like thine—  
Thy mould and his define  
A likeness each to each—

But go! Deep pain,  
Alas, would be  
His name to thee,  
And told in vain!"

*Feb. 2, 1899*

## MEMORY AND I

“O MEMORY, where is now my youth,  
Who used to say that life was truth?”

“I saw him in a crumbled cot  
Beneath a tottering tree ;  
That he as phantom lingers there  
Is only known to me.”

"O Memory, where is now my joy,  
Who lived with me in sweet employ?"

"I saw him in gaunt gardens lone,  
Where laughter used to be ;  
That he as phantom wanders there  
Is known to none but me."

"O Memory, where is now my hope,  
Who charged with deeds my skill and  
scope?"

"I saw her in a tomb of tomes,  
Where dreams are wont to be ;  
That she as spectre haunteth there  
Is only known to me."

"O Memory, where is now my faith,  
One time a champion, now a wraith?"

"I saw her in a ravaged aisle,  
Bowed down on bended knee :  
That her poor ghost outflickers there  
Is known to none but me."

“ O Memory, where is now my love,  
That rayed me as a god above ? ”

“ I saw her in an ageing shape  
Where beauty used to be ;  
That her fond phantom lingers there  
Is only known to me.”

'ΑΓΝΩΣΤΩ, ΘΕΩ,

L ONG have I framed weak phantasies of  
Thee,  
O Willer masked and dumb !  
Who makest Life become,—  
As though by labouring all-unknowingly,  
Like one whom reveries numb.

How much of consciousness informs Thy will,  
Thy biddings, as if blind,  
Of death-inducing kind,  
Nought shows to us ephemeral ones who fill  
But moments in Thy mind.

Perhaps Thy ancient rote-restricted ways  
Thy ripening rule transcends ;  
That listless effort tends  
To grow percipient with advance of days,  
And with percipience mends.

For, in unwonted purlieus, far and nigh,  
At whiles or short or long,  
May be discerned a wrong  
Dying as of self-slaughter ; whereat I  
Would raise my voice in song.

THE END















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